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"It was with the utmost difficulty that they maintained their hold." See page 181.

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The BALE MARKED CIRCLE X

A BLOCKADE RUNNING ADVENTURE



By GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

AUTHOR *of*

"A CAROLINA CAVALIER"
"THE LAST OF THE FLATBOATS"
"CAMP VENTURE," ETC.

Illustrated by C. CHASE EMERSON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO., BOSTON

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The BALE MARKED CIRCLE X

The Bale Marked Circle X

CHAPTER I

"Hurry" Orders

THE September sun was intensely hot. The hour was one of the clock in the afternoon, and the tide was at dead low ebb, with no wind whatever blowing. Of course the fish were biting very slowly even when biting at all.

Now and then Billy Boker would haul in a whiting, and lose himself in admiration of its brilliant, changing colors. Now and then his companion, Max Voxetter—or, to be more exact, Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter—would land a croaker, and admire the beautiful spot near its tail. But in the main the fish had retired to the deeper outside waters, and the two boy-soldiers were sitting in their boat and simply waiting for the sure returning of the tide, to set fish appetites agoing again, and to enable themselves

by their hooks to provide dinner for the hundred and thirty hungry men of the battery that lay in camp at Bluffton.

Bluffton was a deserted village, war-wrecked and at that time completely abandoned by its population. It is situated in the extreme south-eastern corner of South Carolina, and is altogether the "town beautiful."

The vast agglomeration of inlets, for convenience called South May River, had been reduced by the receding tide to scarcely more than an extensive marsh, seamed here and there with creeks and estuaries of doubtful depth, and of immeasurably muddy bottoms. All this wilderness of marsh, creeks, and sloughs was destined presently to be restored, by the incoming tide, to its normal condition of a complex expanse of half-inland sea, half salt marsh, so full of voracious fish that no question could trouble the two fishing boys as to the abundance of the dinner which they—Max Voxetter and Billy Boker—daily undertook to provide for the battery of men on shore—a battery of Virginian mountaineers whose ignorance of sea-fishing was as pronounced as is the South Sea Islander's misconception of an Alaska blizzard.

Billy Boker—seventeen or eighteen years old and only five feet two inches high if he raised his

heels a little—and Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter—nineteen years old, but standing fully five feet ten in his stockings—were charged with the duty of catching at least two hundred food fishes during each day in order to feed the battery, which had no other food supply of any sort than that of the sea.

The boys had no fear, however. The tide was out now, and the marshes were exuding odors that could by no possible stretch of the imagination be supposed to be the exhilarating perfumes of Araby. But it needed only the turn of the waters which the slowly swinging boat reported as now upon them, to enable Max and Billy quickly to fill their little craft, *The Rebel,* with the choicest fish of the sea, while casting overboard all the sting-rays, dog-fish, toad-fish, pin-cushions and villainous little sharks that their shrimp bait mightily tempted to interference with their hooks and lines.

Still the tide had not yet fully turned and the fish had not yet begun in earnest to bite when Billy Boker in his nonchalant fashion, which always grew more nonchalant as the occasion for hurry increased, called out to his companion:

"That's a good big sting-ray that you have hooked, Max, but there's no time to land him and cut off his tail, for I may casually remark that I

observe on the flag staff at camp yonder, what I have been carefully instructed by you, as my superior and wisely over-informed officer, to regard as a 'double-hurry signal.' It means, if I interpret it aright, that you are to go ashore in about the fewest number of seconds that you can manage; so perhaps you had better cut your fish line while I pull up the anchor."

Billy spoke deliberately, quite as if he had all the lazy, sub-tropical afternoon in which to finish his slowly begun sentence, but the two boys hurried nevertheless. Before Billy Boker had finished what he had to say, Max's line was severed at the gunwale, the anchor was in the boat with all its mud unwashed from its flukes, and the two stalwart young fellows were pulling with all their might at the long, limber oars.

"I hope it means orders of some sort," said Max as he gave the stroke. "I am utterly tired out with inaction. After all our hot fighting in Virginia last summer, this South Carolina coast service seemed a sort of rest at first to me, but I am getting very, very tired of it. I would like something livelier."

"So would I," answered Billy, struggling hard, with his short anatomy, to keep stroke with Max's enormous oar swings. "Only, my dear boy, you should say 'something more strenuous'

instead of 'something livelier.' Let us love this language of ours and—"

"Oh, shut up, Billy," interrupted Max. "What you and I want is a fight, and you can call it by any name you please if only we get it."

"You are quite right, my boy," answered Billy; "call it an 'action' or a 'skirmish' or an 'encounter' or, resort to French if you like, and characterize it as a 'reconnaissance' or a 'reconnoissance' or as a 'rencontre' or—hello! there's the captain hurrying us, so something is up anyhow. Maybe it means a fight with some force that has landed below!"

With that, Billy, in his capacity as bow-oar landed the boat, with reckless disregard of her frail ribs, against the little pier on Buck Island that served the battery for its mooring place. Max having shipped his oars in anticipation of the landing, hastily leaped ashore and touched his cap to his commanding officer.

"I report myself for duty, sir," was all he said.

"I have received these orders," answered the officer. "As the time is exceedingly short, to catch the train, you had better read them on horseback and ride to Hardeeville with all possible speed. Your horse is already saddled. A courier will follow to bring the horse back. You

are to catch the evening train for Charleston. Your orders will explain the rest. Go!"

The boy swung himself instantly into the saddle, and a moment later was agallop on the long, eighteen-mile ride to Hardeeville, the railroad station nearest to Bluffton. As his horse—recovered from the excitement of the spurs that had stimulated him while he was crossing the little stretch of sand which the fiddler crabs haunted in such multitudes—settled himself into a traveling gallop, the tall boy dropped the reins upon the animal's neck and proceeded to read the orders that had been placed in his hands. This was the way in which they ran:

"HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH CAROLINA AND GEORGIA,
CHARLESTON, *Sept.* 10, 1863.

To Captain J. N. LAMSON,
Commanding the Outposts,
Bluffton, S. C.

SIR:

You are hereby ordered instantly to detach on special service your Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter. You will direct Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter to report at these headquarters on the arrival of the evening train to-day. No excuse for delay beyond that time will be accepted. Sergeant-Major Voxetter must present himself at

that time or both you and he will be held to accountability for the failure.

By order of General Beauregard.

(Signed) THOMAS JORDAN,
Brig.-Gen. and A. A. G."

After reading it, Max Voxetter pocketed the order and gently touched his horse with his spurs. He was an experienced "man on horseback;" he knew that his animal could do a trifle more to the minute, in the matter of speed, than he was already doing, but he knew also that he could do only a trifle more, and might presently do greatly less if now urged beyond reason. So he put the splendid animal at his best endeavors, and after a long, nerve-racking and sweltering ride, he reached the railroad station just as the train—already half an hour late—was drawing away from the platform. The youth, with chevrons on his arm, gave three sharp whistles as he dismounted, and the engineer—who probably saw the chevrons and recognized the authority that they carried with them—slowed down his engine until the nimble-footed boy, abandoning his horse where it stood in the roadway, clambered over the end of the platform and threw himself upon the last of the now moving cars.

That is the way in which military things were done in that intensely military time.

CHAPTER II

"Ready!"

IT was nearly midnight when the pottering train managed at last to creep across the Ashley River bridge into the town of Charleston. Young Voxetter, who was in no mood of sleepiness, jumped at once into a cab and ordered the man on the box to drive like Jehu to headquarters. The boy had not a cent in his pocket, and his transportation papers in no way authorized him to employ cabmen's services, but at any rate he had orders to report in a hurry at headquarters, and he confidently assumed that these orders carried with them the right to take cabs and to hurry them. He took a cab therefore in full confidence that its hire would be discharged by some quartermaster, stationed somewhere, under orders of the department commander.

When the long-legged, slender-waisted, high-booted boy strode into headquarters a little after midnight, General Beauregard was himself at his desk. He asked the boy's name, but made no

question as to his rank. That was indicated of course by the three chevrons and the three semi-circular bars of red that adorned his arm. To the general's questions Max Voxetter replied with that sententiousness which military life had taught him as the essence of conversational ability when talking to a man of much higher rank than his own. After he had made his answers, as he stood there, beautiful in his lithe length of limb, General Beauregard whirled about in his chair and, without asking the boy to be seated, said:

"I have received excellent accounts of you as to courage, intelligence and sagacity. I have learned also that you possess a certain technical skill which may be useful in the public service. I understand that you know something of navigating a ship. Is that correct?"

"I can take an observation, sir, and I know how to box the compass."

"Very well. I am assured also that you are a young man disposed upon occasion to take serious risks in the discharge of public duties. Is that true?"

"Pardon me if I do not fully understand, General," answered the boy.

"The question is simple enough," General Beauregard answered. "I asked if you were willing to take risks?"

"And I answer," responded the boy, stretching himself to his full five feet ten of height, "that I am a soldier."

"I do not quite understand," replied the general.

"Just let me quote your own words," said the youth. "Let me say that my answer is simple enough. You ask me if I am ready to take risks. I answer that I am a soldier. Surely that answer is complete, General. If not, let me supplement it. I am ready at any hazard, at any risk, at any time, to undertake any honorable duty becoming to a soldier, which may be assigned to me."

The boy was obviously irritated, and had his interlocutor been a person of less distinguished rank than he was, Max Voxetter would pretty certainly have used terms that might have been construed as unsoldierly. As it was, he simply straightened himself after delivering this answer, while General Beauregard smiled in apparent approval.

"Good!" exclaimed the general. "You are the young man we want." Then turning to a memorandum, which had been placed upon his desk in advance, he consulted it for a moment and said:

"A train leaves Charleston for Richmond tomorrow morning at four o'clock. Take it. On

your arrival at Richmond, no matter what hour of the night or day it may be, you are to report at once to the War Department for orders. My clerk here will provide you with transportation, and with the formal written orders and passports under which you are to travel. Good-night!"

The boy touched his cap, and with a muttered "Good-night," retired to the ante-room whither the clerk followed him to arrange the matter of written orders, transportation, passports and the like.

Max was bewildered beyond measure. He was utterly unable to imagine why he had been ordered to Richmond, or upon what possible service it could be that he, instead of some other person nearer at hand, was wanted. General Beauregard had of course given him a small hint by asking concerning his knowledge of navigation, but the hint amounted to very little, inasmuch as Charleston and every other Confederate port was at that time closely blockaded by a fleet of warships. But whatever else Max had learned in his short life of nineteen years, this one lesson had been borne in upon him as the alphabet of a soldier's duty—to obey orders without asking unnecessary questions concerning them—and so, as soon as he received his orders, his passports and his transportation certificates he betook himself to the near-

est commissary's office and drew the supply of cooked rations to which, under his orders, he was entitled. And the rations did not amount to much either.

CHAPTER III

A Night in Richmond

IT was two o'clock in the morning when Max Voxetter's train drew into Richmond—two hours behind time, after the custom of most trains in those days.

It was a night of pouring rain, thick fog and unutterable mud. Max stood for a moment on the unroofed platform of the Petersburg railroad station, hesitating. Should he go at once to the War Department as his orders directed him to do, or should he wait for daylight and office hours? He had no personal care for the rain, the fog or the mud of course. He was a soldier too well seasoned to mind such things on his own account. "But what will the bomb proof dandies of the War Department think of me," he muttered, "if I invade their cosy quarters at this time of night and sit there dripping rain water over their valuable rugs while awaiting orders? Won't the orders come quickly, and won't they be simply 'get out of this, you drenched denizen of the night and the storm'?"

Nevertheless there were Max Voxetter's orders in Max Voxetter's pocket, and they were peremptory enough. They read:

"You are to report at the War Department instantly on your arrival in Richmond, without any regard whatever to the time of the day or night."

So Max took up one more hole in his belt—just to make up for the supper that wasn't under it—and set out in the rain, the fog and the mud that at times came half way up his long boot tops.

It seemed a simple enough thing to do, to walk from the station up Shockhoe hill through Eighth Street to Main Street, thence one block east to Ninth Street and thence north half a block to the Mechanics' Institute building where the War Department of the Confederate States of America had its quarters.

The distance was small, but the way was beset with difficulties, as Max soon discovered. General Winder, provost marshal, had laid his iron hand upon the Confederate capital. With an authority as irresponsible as that of the Russian Third Section, which is answerable to nobody,—with an authority which seemed to take orders from nobody, to submit itself to nobody's control, and to work its own will regardless of all else of military or civil law,—General Winder gave his orders and enforced his decrees. At the

corner of Eighth and Cary Streets, Max Voxetter encountered this authority in the form of a sentinel who demanded his passports. Max offered his orders in response to the demand. Happily the sentry was unable to read the document, not for lack of light, but because the art of reading manuscript had not been included in the list of his educational accomplishments. So Max read the orders to the sentry, and obligingly explained to him their very peremptory character. The man was satisfied and Max was permitted to pass on.

But worse difficulty was in store for him. At the corner of Main Street and Ninth, where Meade and Baker's drug store then stood, he was a second time called to a halt. This time the sentry was not only able to read, but was gifted with a questioning turn of mind. He easily made out that somebody in Charleston had ordered Sergeant-Major Max Voxetter to report at the War Department in Richmond. But who was that somebody? What right had he to give orders? Of what force were his orders in Richmond? How could a drenched sentry, in the small hours of the morning, determine whether or not the signatures were genuine? And how could he know that the man issuing them had authority to issue them? And above all what would General Winder say?

Max Voxetter saw the perplexity of the man's mind and decided to take a short road out of the difficulty.

"Arrest me then," he said. "Take me to the War Department as a prisoner,—it is only half a block away—and let the people there pass on my credentials."

"But I don't report to the War Department," answered the man. "I report only to the provost marshal."

"Oh, very well!" answered Max. "Take me to Castle Thunder then, and let me show my credentials there."

"But I can't leave my post," said the sentry. "I mustn't leave this post till I'm relieved at sunrise. So I'll just have to keep you here till then."

"But in the meantime," argued Max, "you're compelling me to disobey the orders of my commanding general."

"Well, I can't help it; Winder's 'bomb proof men,' as you fighting fellows call us, know only one authority on this earth, and that is the provost marshal's. So I've simply got to keep you here in the rain till morning."

"Then call your corporal of the guard," said Max with a tone of command acquired by long use of authority.

"That's jest the trouble," replied the man. "There ain't no corporal of the guard, and there ain't no sergeant and there ain't nobody else. We uns is jest put here at dark to stand guard till daylight, and let nobody pass, no soldier at least, an' that's all they is about it. So all you've got to do is jest to stay here in the rain till mornin'."

Max saw the situation. He did not purpose to accommodate himself to it. So he decided instantly to resort to strategy. He opened an argument with the sentry—not because he imagined the sentry to be accessible to any argument, for he did not, but because he had other purposes in mind. He argued with no hope of convincing. He pleaded and protested without the slightest expectation of changing the man's obstructive attitude of mind. But as he did so, Max freely placed his hands upon the sentinel's shoulders, caressingly fondled his arms, and now and then even threw his own arms about the man's neck in persuasive eloquence, and "fumbled" the fellow generally.

Suddenly he stopped all this fooling and fumbling and, in the tone of a superior officer, he said:

"I've had quite enough of this nonsense. My orders are to report at the War Department at once. I'm going to do so and, sir, you will interfere at your peril. I'm going on my way. *Shoot*

if you want to, but you'll do so on your own responsibility."

With that the boy set off up the street at a rapid gait, but the sentry did not fire at him. He leveled his gun indeed, and cocked it, and took deliberate aim with it, and pulled its trigger—but no explosion followed, and no bullet was discharged from its gaping muzzle.

Perhaps the reason was that Max Voxetter was at that moment holding the sentry's percussion cap between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand, and no gun in that day ever thought of going off without the explosion of a percussion cap on the initiatory nipple of it. By a deft movement, while the argument and the fumbling had been going on, Max Voxetter had possessed himself of the percussion cap, removing it from its nipple and making of it a harmless personal possession of his own.

The sentinel, whose Enfield rifle had thus been rendered as innocent as any broomstick, did not pursue Max. Max had not expected that he would do so. For had not the man already told the sergeant-major that under his orders he dare not leave his post long enough even to take a prisoner to the guard house?

It happened, therefore, quite naturally enough, that a few minutes later Sergeant-Major Maxi-



"He leveled his gun indeed, and cocked it, and took deliberate aim with it."

milian Voxetter was tugging at a bell-knob which had no other reason for being than that of announcing to the persons within the War Department the fact that somebody outside wanted to see them.

The orderly who opened the door was so nearly asleep that Sergeant-Major Max determined to shock him into wakefulness. So instead of announcing himself and his business, Max made an effort to pass the man, with some hustling. The orderly was quick enough to arouse himself, and acting on the first impulse he called aloud: "Turn out the guard!" Instantly a file of eight or ten men appeared, with their rifles at full cock.

"Oh, never mind the guard," said Max, quite as a major-general might do in declining that attention. "I am ordered to report here at once."

"Go about your business then," answered the orderly, "and come here at ten o'clock in the morning."

"Pardon me!" answered the sergeant-major, who appreciated the humor of the situation, as he stood there with streams of water trickling from every article of his clothing, and with now and then a spill from the brim of his soft felt hat, as he leant forward. "Pardon me, but my business lies precisely here and it is not confined to office

hours. I'll trouble you to glance at that!" and he handed to the orderly his orders from General Beauregard.

The orderly read the paper, and quickly changed his tone.

"I beg your pardon, Sergeant-Major," he said obsequiously, "but I didn't recognize you. I have orders to admit you at any hour, and to wake up the officer in charge whenever you arrive. As you have now arrove"—the orderly's English was more regular than accurate—"as you have now arrove, will you please step in here till I call the colonel?"

With that Max, drenched and dripping, was ushered into a little private office, where he waited for the coming of his high-mightiness, the officer in charge of the War Department for the night.

While he waited, Max fell a-thinking. What did it all mean? What could it mean? Why was he, an obscure boy, the sergeant-major of a detached battery, thus selected for some special service, and peremptorily ordered to that centre and source of all authority, the War Department itself? What was the nature of the service expected of him? Why was he ordered to wake up the War Department at this wet and unseemly hour of the night? Why did the War Depart-

ment lay such stress upon his coming as to give special orders for his admission and for the waking up of an officer to receive his wetly unwelcome visit in the middle of a very bad night?

Max was sorely puzzled as he asked himself all these questions, but as he could answer none of them he fell back upon his soldierly mental habit of waiting for orders and obeying them without asking about their meaning.

So, after wondering somewhat over his situation and speculating about the orders that had put him into it, he dismissed the entire matter from his mind, as one that others and not he must deal with, and he simply waited, conscious all the while that his rain-soaked coat was ruining the costly silk upholstery of the chair he occupied.

After a brief while the colonel entered, half dressed and still struggling with his suspenders.

"Ah, you are Sergeant-Major Voxetter?" he asked. Then, without waiting for an answer he added: "I'm glad to see you. We've been expecting you. Be seated please," for Max had risen to salute his superior. "Now we must get to business at once. There's no time to lose. We have good accounts of you. Good accounts. Excellent accounts. And Gen. Beauregard recommends you unreservedly on the strength of the reports he has received. Very well. You're the

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man we want. Can we get you? Are you ready to undertake a difficult—perhaps a very dangerous —service?"

"I am a soldier," answered Max, as he had answered Gen. Beauregard.

"You mean by that—?"

"I mean by that that I am ready to undertake any honorable service that may be assigned to me. As for the risks—well, they are a soldier's portion, like short rations, or guard duty, or sand in his shoes, or pickled mule for corned beef."

The colonel seemed pleased with the answer. He paced the floor for a time, and then resumed:

"You're a sailor?"

"Hardly that," Max answered. "But I'm the son of a sea captain and I know how to sail a ship."

"That's what I mean. Your father is Captain Voxetter of Charleston—"

"His present address is Fort Warren in Boston harbor, I believe," answered Max.

"Oh, yes, of course. He was captured by the enemy. We'll arrange for his exchange. You went often to sea with him?"

"I was born at sea," answered the boy, "on board my father's ship in the Straits of Torres, and he brought me up on shipboard, and taught me himself till I was old enough to enter college.

Then he sent me here to Virginia where I had been in school less than a year when we boys all enlisted and went to the front, and were taken prisoners at Rich Mountain. We were paroled, and I went back to Charleston and while waiting for my exchange I made a voyage with my father."

"Yes," said the colonel with less of excitement than he had shown before. "You were with him when he took an old river steamboat to the Bahamas, and sailed back through the bombarding blockade fleet, with three hundred tons of gunpowder in the big box of a steamboat that he had under him. Good! I say. Excellent. You're the man we want. But let's get down to business. You know how to sail a ship?"

"A little. I can shoot the horizon and work out a ship's position."

"And you know the South Carolina coast pretty well?"

"Yes, pretty well. I may even say *very* well, without boasting, I think."

"Good again! Now do you know any way by which you could make your way from Charleston to Nassau without being discovered?"

As the colonel asked this crucial question he arose and eagerly stood over the boy to await his answer.

"There's the *Minho,*" answered Max. "She runs the blockade with almost packet-like regularity."

A gesture of impatience preceded the colonel's answer. At last he said:

"We don't trust the officers of the *Minho* or the other blockade runners. They are Englishmen. They are in business only for money. In the matter I'm going to employ you in, there might be more money for them in getting caught than in getting through. Can't you think of some other way?"

"Easily," answered Max. "I could fit out a little sloop at Charleston—one of the shallow draught kind that trade up and down the inland coast waters. I could load her with ten or a dozen bales of cotton, and as I know all the small creeks, I could work her out to sea some dark night, through Folly River or some other of the little sloughs that are dry at low water but carry a few feet of water at high tide. The blockading fleet simply cannot be watching all these little passageways, for there are hundreds of them on that coast. I've often thought that if I weren't a soldier, I'd go into that sort of blockade running. One of those sloops will carry ten or twelve bales of cotton that costs next to nothing in Charleston, but is worth its weight in quinine in Nassau."

"Good!" eagerly interrupted the colonel. "Never mind the details. I'll leave all that to you. I don't know a bowsprit from a marlin spike and I've no need to. You know how to get some sort of tub from Charleston to Nassau, so—"

"That is if the tub doesn't sink under me in the Gulf Stream—"

"Are there risks of that sort?"

"Of course. Those little sloops are built for use on inland waters exclusively, and not at all for the gales that blow in the Gulf Stream, still less for the hurricanes that in the autumn often blow up from the West Indies. Still I think I can take a craft of that kind from Charleston to Nassau in safety, after I once get her to sea; and I'm willing anyhow to take all the risks."

"Good! good! good!" exclaimed the colonel. "Now what do you want?"

"What do I want? I don't understand you—"

"Oh, I mean what orders, what arrangements, what men, what provisions, what supplies and what everything else? Suppose you don't answer now. Go to your breakfast. I've ordered it at Zetelle's, and I'll send a guard to see you past Winder's pickets. I'll join you there in just twenty minutes—and meantime you can make up

your mind as to what you will need. You are to take the seven o'clock train for Charleston."

So under charge of a guard, Max took his departure.

CHAPTER IV

The Bale Marked "Circle X"

WHILE Max ate his breakfast he thought out the situation to the best of his ability, jotting down a memorandum now and then. When the little colonel bustled in, his hands full of papers and a clerk following him, whom he bade remain in the outer room until summoned, Max was ready for him.

"First of all, Colonel," he said, "will you kindly tell me just what it is that you want me to do?"

The excited little colonel seemed utterly dumbfounded by the question, and Max seeing his perturbation promptly came to his relief with an explanation.

"I don't ask to know secrets," he said. "I only ask you to tell me in your own way what it is that you want me to do. When I know that, I shall be able to tell you what I shall need for the doing of it."

"Oh, yes, certainly!" said the colonel. "I hadn't thought of that. But of course it's necessary—very necessary! Well, what I want is that

you shall go to Nassau without going by any of the regular blockade runners. I want you to go secretly, silently—you understand—and—"

"Oh, I understand that," answered Max looking at his watch to remind the colonel of the brevity of the time at disposal. "And I have already thought out my plans. I'll take a little sloop, load her with cotton—ten or a dozen bales—sneak her out through one of the tide water channels and take her to port or to Davy Jones as the case may be."

"But it must be port and *not* Davy Jones," quickly answered the colonel. "I'm going to furnish one of your bales of cotton, and you simply *must* deliver it."

"I'll deliver it, Colonel," answered the boy, "unless it and I go down together."

"Good! Now I have arranged all that. The quartermaster at Charleston is to arrange with Fraser, Trenholm & Co. to furnish you with as many bales of cotton as you call for. One of them the quartermaster will furnish himself. It will be marked 'Circle X,' this way ⊗"—he illustrated on paper. "To deliver that bale of cotton is what you go for. Nothing else matters but that bale must either be delivered in safety to the agent to whom it is consigned, or it must be destroyed."

Here the colonel arose, opened the door and looked into the ante-room. Having satisfied himself that nobody was eavesdropping he returned to the table, threw a coffee cup at a waiter who intruded his head through another door, and resumed, in a tone scarcely above a whisper.

"The bale marked 'Circle X' will contain documents. It will also contain fifty-one pounds" —the colonel seemed never to deal in round numbers—"of the very best Dupont's rifle powder. From its surface, and leading into it, there will be a port-fire. You know about port-fires, don't you?"

"Of course," answered the boy. "I am an artilleryman."

"Well, then, you know you can't light a port-fire in any ordinary way, but that it catches instantly from burning gunpowder. You know too that it burns under water as freely as in the open air?"

"Yes, Colonel," said the boy again consulting his watch, "I know all about port-fires, I think."

"Very well, then," answered the colonel. "There'll be a port-fire communicating with the fifty-one pounds of rifle powder in the centre of the bale marked 'Circle X.' You are to deliver that bale of cotton if you can. If you *can't* you

are to set off the port-fire and blow the thing to smithereens. My dear boy, it will mean—"

"Oh, I know all that," interrupted Max. "Never mind that, Colonel. It's a chance of the game. It won't be any worse than if a shell should explode in the convolutions of my transverse colon, and of course one takes the chance of that happening every time he faces artillery fire. I'll deliver the bale marked 'Circle X' or I'll blow it into smithereens, as you say, no matter what the personal consequences may happen to be to me or to anybody else. So please consider that matter settled."

As he ended this speech Max again uneasily consulted his watch.

The colonel paused. He arose from his chair, leant over the table, and looked at the boy intently as if trying to read his inmost soul in his eyes or his countenance. After a moment or two he said:

"Well, *you are a good sort!* I wish I could command a brigade of just such fellows!"

"Thank you, Colonel, I'd like to serve under your command in that brigade."

"I believe you would, my boy. Very well. Now to business. We've only thirty-seven minutes left—thirty-seven and a quarter. What will you need for this expedition?"

"A ship, first of all."

"The quartermaster will have orders to buy and pay for the one you select. Go on, what else?"

"The cotton for cargo—but I'd rather get that myself."

"Very well. I leave that to you. Now what else?"

"Charts, a sextant, a chronometer and a CREW," answered the lad with special emphasis on the last word.

"Charts, a sextant and a chronometer will be provided for in your orders," answered the colonel. "As for a crew—well, you'd best select that for yourself."

"That is just the trouble, Colonel," said Max, rising in his earnestness. "If you'll put yourself in my place you'll understand. I am willing to undertake this enterprise. I am willing to take every risk that is involved in it, except one."

"What is the one exceptional risk that you hesitate to take?" asked the colonel with much of concern in his voice.

"The risk of failure," answered the boy. "You see, Colonel, if I have to go down in the Gulf Stream, or if a blockading ship knocks the life out of me in my effort to get out to sea, or even if I have to blow up the whole outfit, includ-

ing myself, as a last desperate resort—in any such case as these I shall need to have with me some men whom I know and can trust. I don't want to fail. I don't want any flinching or hesitation, or defect of courage at the critical moment. I don't want any cowards to deal with. So I don't want anybody on board the sloop except men whom I can absolutely trust to stand by me to the end and to help me execute my orders even when their execution means death to all of us. I want men who can swim, because swimming may come in as a factor of success. I want men who are brave and loyal and true to their toe nails, so that I can trust them to stand by me so long as there's a chance of accomplishing our purpose, and men who won't flinch if at the last moment I have to blow them into sausage meat. My father used to say that he had rather go to sea in an eggshell, if he knew he had men that would stand by him, than go in the best ship ever built, with a crew whose courage he doubted. Now it is in that spirit that I accept your offer to let me select my own crew."

The colonel looked at him a moment, with intensity of gaze, and then said:

"Well, certainly you are the right sort." Then after a pause he added:

"My boy, you have no idea how much this ex-

pedition means. You will never know, so long as you live, how important it is that the bale marked 'Circle X' shall be delivered in safety at Nassau. Certainly you will never know or imagine how important a thing it is that, if you find it impossible to deliver that bale of cotton at its destination, you shall blow it into unrecognizable fragments. So! So! So! Don't interrupt me with any protests, please, for I believe now,—nay I KNOW,—that you are the very best person that could have been selected for this mission. Let all that go as a thing settled. Now, our time is so short, let's go on with other things. You shall have whatever assistance you want in your endeavor to carry out this delicate and difficult purpose of the War Department. Do you personally know the men you want to take with you?"

"Yes, perfectly. They are—"

"Well, never mind their names now," interrupted the colonel. "Are they men in the service?"

"Yes; men in my own battery."

"Good!" Then calling in the clerk, from the ante-room, he said:

"Take down a special order quickly," looking at his watch.

"Special order Number 18. It is hereby ordered that Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter

be detailed upon special service until further orders from this department. It is ordered that Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter shall be permitted to select from among the enlisted men now engaged in the military or naval service of the Confederate States such assistants, not exceeding five in number, as he may require for the accomplishment of the duties confidentially assigned to him by this department. It is further ordered that every enlisted man who may be called for under this order, shall be immediately detailed to such service by his company and regimental officers, and ordered to report without delay to Sergeant-Major Voxetter at such time and place as he may designate.

"Still further it is ordered that every enlisted man detailed under this order shall be carried on the muster and pay rolls of his company, as a soldier detached for special service until further orders."

"There," said the colonel. "Take Sergeant-Major Voxetter's Charleston address and see to it that seven copies of that order are sent to him by the very next train out of Richmond. Now, Sergeant-Major, good-bye and good luck to you! You have just seven minutes in which to catch your train."

"What about Winder passports?" asked the

boy. "Will the provost guards let me leave on the train?"

"I'll see to that," answered the colonel. "Here, orderly. Send twelve men with Sergeant-Major Voxetter. See that he is not interfered with. Use force if needed. He is leaving for Charleston under special orders of the War Department. The sergeant in charge of the squad is to permit nobody to interfere with him or to delay him, on pain of death. Send two men and a corporal with him on the train as far as Weldon. After that there'll be no trouble. Good-bye, Sergeant-Major! You've just three and three-quarter minutes. God speed you! The chances are nine in ten that you'll never get your ship out of harbor—and if you do, they are nine in ten that you'll have to blow up that bale of cotton and your crew and yourself. Still I hope the best for you. Good-bye! Do the best you can and the next time I see you you'll be a major without sergeant as a prefix."

The minutes were now at a minimum. So at last the colonel let the boy go, under orders that doomed him to a service so perilous that the little colonel did not really expect ever to see the splendidly gallant young fellow again. But as a great military writer has said: "War is a hazard of possibilities, probabilities, luck and ill luck." And Ser-

geant-Major Max Voxetter was ready to accept all those hazards. He was so, chiefly because he had quite well learned that possibilities are convertible into probabilities, and ill luck into good luck by the timely use of brains, care, and a reasonable sagacity in emergent circumstances. He was ready to blow up that bale and himself with it, if it should become really necessary to do so. But he had not the smallest intention to let any such necessity arise, if, by any foresight or sagacity of his own, he could prevent it.

On his arrival at Charleston his first care was to write to the two whom he had selected to be his comrades in this enterprise—Billy Boker and Tiberius Gracchus Smith. He told them only so much as was necessary—that he was charged with an enterprise involving difficulty and perhaps great danger; that he wanted them to go with him if they were ready to do so as volunteers, willing to take their lives in their hands for the occasion; that he had authority to detail them as his assistants, if they desired, and that he would do so on receipt of their assent to the plan. He selected these two for several reasons. They were devotedly loyal friends of his own. Their courage was beyond dispute. They were quick-witted fellows, such as he especially needed in such an enterprise, and finally he had been for months past

carefully instructing them in the art of sailing a boat.

Their response was instant and enthusiastic. "We'll go with you anywhere," they telegraphed, and a week later he sent them orders to join him at Charleston.

In the meanwhile Max was busily at work finding a suitable ship, putting her into condition, and making other needful arrangements.

CHAPTER V

The Young Shipmaster

WHEN early in October the two young men arrived at Charleston they found Max's camp on Gadsden's Green abandoned to a quartermaster's guard. After much inquiry and some search they found Max himself bivouacking on a pier on the Cooper River side of the town. He was manifestly in ill temper—a very unusual thing with him.

A clumsy sloop lay alongside the pier—a sloop of the kind that plies about in the harbor, the rivers and the inlets of that water-laced coast, carrying wood, or cotton or supplies between the plantations and the city. She was about thirty-five or thirty-eight feet long, rather broad in the beam and of very light draught. She had been built to ply in shallow waters and to carry her load on the deck. But Max had altered her considerably as we shall presently see.

"What's the matter with your temper, Max?" was Billy Boker's first question.

"Quartermasters," answered the youth with a

snap. "I'll tell you all about it presently. Meantime go there and put some fenders between the sloop and the dock. There's a little sea on and the sloop is chafing a bit. So am I. But by the time you do that I'll be ready to tell you all about things."

The young men did his bidding and then came back to him.

"Let's begin at the beginning," he said in answer to the questions they wanted to ask, but did not. "You see we are going to run the blockade in that sloop—"

"In that old tub?" interrupted Tibe Smith. "Why she—"

"You're not going to fail me, are you?" snappishly asked Max.

"Fail you? Certainly not. I was only going to say—"

"Well, never mind that," broke in Max, satisfied that neither fear nor "flunking" was in the minds of his companions. "We're going to run the blockade in that old tub, and the quartermaster has bothered me from the first. You see he hasn't been taken into anybody's confidence, and he wants to be. His curiosity is aroused. He doesn't know where we're going or why, and he wants to know, and I won't tell him. So at every step he has bothered me. When I bought the ship

—after searching the harbor and all the rivers to find one fit for our purpose, he objected to the price and wanted me to take a wretched old scow instead. The War Department settled that. Then I wanted alterations made so that I could stow a cargo of cotton below the decks, for ballast. Again he objected and wanted to know why I couldn't carry my load on deck as had always been done on this boat. I couldn't explain without telling him where we were going, so I couldn't explain at all. But you see while the old tub might carry her cargo on deck in her voyages around this quiet harbor, she could never cross the Gulf Stream loaded in that fashion. So I insisted on having the deck raised a trifle—enough to admit baled cotton below. He refused. I appealed to the War Department and got peremptory orders sent to him to fulfil my requisitions. Little by little, by a fight at every turn, I have managed to get the craft ready. I've got a dozen bales of cotton squeezed in there between the deck and the keelson. I've got three tons of iron strapping bolted to the boat's keel for additional ballast—my, how he did fight against that!—I've got a little bunking space built in at the companion way for us to sleep in and I've got my cargo aboard—all except the bale marked Circle X. That's what we are fighting about now. I've telegraphed the

War Department. Hish—don't say a word. Here comes the quartermaster's sergeant."

A moment later the sergeant saluted and said:

"The quartermaster bids me say that under orders just received from the War Department he withdraws his objection to your loading plans, which he still thinks foolish in the extreme. The bale marked Circle X will be delivered to you within an hour, and the quartermaster bids me say that you are free to dispose of it as you please, he not being responsible for any consequences."

"You did that extremely well, Sergeant," said Max, now rippling all over with smiles. "If I ever get a chance I'll recommend you for promotion for your extraordinary faithfulness in delivering a message. In the meantime will you please give me *my copy* of the War Department's orders? Of course you have it in your pocket."

The sergeant hesitated—he was very loyal to his chief—but he knew his duty, and after a moment he drew a paper from his pocket and delivered it to the sergeant-major. It was dated at the War Department and signed by Adjutant-General Cooper himself. It was, therefore, a direct and peremptory order from the President, as Commander in Chief. It was addressed to the quartermaster at Charleston through Gen. Beauregard's headquarters, and read as follows:

"The orders already given by this department concerning Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter's expedition have been peremptory and explicit. Your persistence in questioning them will be no longer tolerated with patience. You are hereby again and finally directed to honor whatever requisitions Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter may make upon you for material supplies, and you are expressly forbidden to interfere in any way with the arrangements which the confidence of the War Department in his skill and discretion has authorized him to make. You will deliver a perfect copy of these orders to Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter, and henceforth abstain from all efforts to interfere with him, bearing in mind the fact that he is acting under the direct instructions and authority of this Department and with its unreserved confidence."

"Now what is 'the bale marked Circle X,' if you don't mind telling us?" asked Tibe Smith, his face all aglow with eagerness. "On that there hangs a tale, I'll be bound."

"Well," answered Max, choosing his words carefully, "the bale marked Circle X, as nearly as I can make out the matter, is a combined mail bag or despatch box and torpedo. It is a bale of cotton, loaded, as to its inside, with some papers and fifty-one pounds of rifle powder. What the papers

are, I don't know, nor what their purpose is. But the fifty-one pounds of rifle powder is intended to blow us three fellows into kingdom come, as an incident to the destruction of the papers. The purpose of our expedition is to deliver that bale of cotton to the Confederate Agent at Nassau. If we find that we can't do that we are charged with the simple and unimportant duty of blowing the thing up—we fellows being included, of course, in the destructive effects of the explosion, unless we are fortunately able to take ourselves out of the way after firing the torpedo and before it goes off."

"But how are we to fire it?" asked Billy.

"There's a port-fire, eight or nine inches long," answered Max, "reaching from the outer surface of the bale to the charge of gunpowder within. All we've got to do is to fire a pistol held close to the end of the port-fire, and then make a run for whatever chance of escape there may be. If it comes to that you fellows may possibly get away anyhow, for it takes only one man to fire a pistol, and I'll be that man, of course, after giving you all the time I can for retreat."

"Well, I reckon we'll argue that a little," said Tibe Smith. "Billy and I will insist—"

"You will insist upon nothing," broke in Max. "From the hour that we cast loose from this dock

there is going to be the most absolute military discipline on board ship. Whatever orders I give, you fellows are to obey, just as you would in a battle. There will be the old comradeship between us until danger comes; then there will be peremptory orders and instant obedience. I tell you, boys, there is no other way in which to make a success of such an expedition as this, and unless you are prepared for the very rigidest possible military discipline, I'll order you back to your fishing and send for Wright Burch and Bole Samuels at once. I can use a club to enforce discipline on them."

The two young fellows saw instantly how deeply in earnest their comrade and commander was, and they saw too how necessary it was that things should be as he proposed. They instantly pledged him their obedience, only begging him that he would take upon himself no imminently dangerous duty to which he might as well detail one or the other of them.

"You see, Max," said Tibe, "when this thing is all over, somebody must make a report on it, and you, as commander of the expedition, are the right one to do that. Besides—"

"Besides nothing," interrupted Max. "I alone have this matter in charge. Under orders of the War Department I have undertaken to deliver

that bale marked Circle X or to blow it into unrecognizable lint. I have pledged myself to do one or the other of these two things. Being permitted to choose my own assistants in the enterprise, I have asked you two—my best friends in the world, —to go with me, and you are going. I shall have to expose you to very serious risks in any case. But when the supreme danger comes with the supreme duty—if they ever come—I shall take that duty and danger as my own portion and if I see any way to save you fellows, or even to give you a chance, I am going to do it."

Tibe and Billy, moved by a simultaneous impulse, simply grasped their young commander's hand and pressed it warmly. Not another word was said between them for a while but they fully understood each other.

After a little, Max said: "There's a box filled with earth out there on the head of the pier, boys. It's made to build a fire on. I wish you two would get us some supper. I'm utterly worn out with quartermasters and loss of sleep. If you don't mind, you'll find some stores under the tarpaulin there, and there's a pile of lightwood at the other end of the pier. I want to sleep a little while. When the bale marked Circle X comes, receipt for it and stow it—never mind. I'll attend to that when I wake. Just receipt for it and get supper.

But don't fail to wake me at seven o'clock—or make it half past seven please. I simply *must* have some sleep."

The boys saw in an instant what Max's condition of exhaustion was. He had in fact slept scarcely at all for a week past, and as very wakeful duty was obviously just ahead, they quietly agreed between themselves to find such difficulties in the preparation of that simple supper as not to have it ready before eight o'clock. In the meantime Max, stretched at his full length upon the bare boards of the pier, and looking the very picture of a young Greek athlete, fell into a profound slumber.

But the little plot to let Max sleep till eight o'clock was doomed to failure. It was only about half past six when the bale marked Circle X arrived at the pier in charge of a sergeant. That personage peremptorily—and very properly—refused to deliver it to anybody but Sergeant-Major Max Voxetter, upon whose signature alone, he said, he was authorized to leave the freight. The boys argued and expostulated and expounded all to no purpose. They explained that Max had lost most of his sleep during the last week or two and wanted a little slumber. They told him of Max's instructions for them to receive and receipt for the bale, but without avail. When at last

they were obliged to wake Max, he declared that for this one time at least, the quartermaster's department was right.

" I'll do the like," he said after the sergeant was gone, " if ever I get that bale to Nassau. I'll deliver it to the agent to whom it is consigned, or else I'll deliver it to nobody. Even on the agent's own written orders I will not let the bale pass out of my hands into any custody but his own. So let's have supper."

CHAPTER VI

The Sairey Ann

"BUT tell us, Max," said Billy as the supper was in progress, "what was the dispute between you and the quartermaster concerning the bale marked Circle X?"

"Oh, yes, I forgot that, or I was interrupted, or something. Well, you remember he wanted me to carry our cargo on deck and I would not do it. That was only because he wanted to find out where I was going and why. Then when the bale marked Circle X came to him with minute and very positive instructions as to its care and delivery to me his curiosity was still further excited and he thought he had a new opportunity to find out about this expedition. He realized at once that in some way—he couldn't imagine in what way—this enterprise centered itself around that bale of cotton. So he came down here to see me in person. He told me that the care of that bale was a matter of the first consequence, a fact that I knew very much better than he could guess. So he wanted me to take out all my cargo in order

that the bale marked Circle X might be stowed away forward in the fore peak, with all the other bales behind it for its protection."

"Protection against what?" asked Tibe.

"I don't at all know," answered Max. "But that was what he suggested. I told him I was going to carry that one bale on deck, just aft of the mast. It was contrary to my practice to tell him anything, but I had to tell him that as an explanation of my requisition for certain extra supplies of small cordage with which to lash the bale securely."

"And did he object to that, after wanting you to carry the whole cargo on deck?" asked Billy.

"Object? Of course he did. He has objected to everything from start to finish. He objects like a lawyer in a criminal court. In fact that is what he was before the war."

"Well, how did you arrange it?"

"Why, he notified me that he wouldn't deliver the bale marked Circle X unless I would agree to stow it as he proposed. Then I simply telegraphed to the War Department, stating the facts and asking for orders. You have seen the orders that came in response. So now I suppose I am master of the situation. I've got the boat, I've got the bale and I've got a crew that will stand by me."

"Thank you!" said both boys in a breath.

"But tell us, Max," added Billy, "why do you intend to carry the bale marked Circle X on deck?"

"Why, simply in order that we may not fail to carry out our instructions," answered Max. "You see we must be able at any moment to get at that bale. We must either deliver it in safety or we must blow it up. So I want it in a convenient position for any emergency. Suppose we had it stowed below when we attempt to get out to sea. Suppose one of those big ironclads should hit us with a shell the shape of a street lamp and twice its size. The ship would go to pieces of course. But cotton bales float, and that one would float with the rest. It would be picked up of course, and opened. Then precisely that would happen which it is our mission to prevent. So I intend to place the bale on the deck just aft of the mast, where we can get at it. If a shell strikes us, as it easily may, and knocks our old tub to pieces, there may still be time for one or another of us to blow up the bale by firing a pistol at it."

"It occurs to me," said Tiberius Gracchus Smith, "that this is an uncommonly cheerful and enlivening conversation with which to promote the easy and comfortable digestion of a supper of

salt horse like the one we're eating. How it does encourage a man's digestive apparatus to wrestle with fried corned beef—for that's just what we are eating—to be told that presently all the convoluted surfaces of his digestive tract are likely to be torn into shreds by gunpowder!"

"Nevertheless," said Max, taking Tibe seriously, "we've got to understand these things before we sail, and besides, Tibe, you fellows asked for the explanation."

Tibe laughed, and that seemed to explain matters.

Supper over, Max had some torches lighted, and, under his directions, the bale marked Circle X was securely lashed to the deck by the other boys. It was already completely covered with bagging carefully sewed on, and on one of its sides, just in the middle, was the mark:



Max was careful to place that side where it could be easily got at, but where rain and spray would least affect it, for, in a private communication from the War Department, Max had received this instruction:

"If you have to fire the bale marked Circle X, you will do so by discharging a pistol into it at the centre of the mark Ⓧ. At that point lies

the end of the port-fire, just under the bagging. It has half a pound of gunpowder around it, scattered among the cotton. This is for extra certainty of firing only. The gunpowder may get wet, though you are instructed to guard against that. But in any case a pistol shot will ignite the port-fire—wet or dry."

Perhaps it should be explained that a port-fire is a pasteboard tube packed, under pressure, full of a paste made of finely pulverized powder mixed with alcohol. When dry this composition is flint-like in its hardness, and, once afire, nothing can put it out. It sends out great volumes of sputtering flame like that of a roman candle, and serves all the purposes of the celebrated "Greek Fire." The flame from it will burn a hole through a two inch oak plank in a few seconds, and immersing it in water makes no difference whatever in the fierceness of its burning. The idea in this case was that if the bale should be cast into the sea, after the port-fire was once ignited, the explosion would occur as certainly as if it had remained on deck. With the port-fire once alight no power in nature could prevent the explosion.

"Now, boys," said Max, when the lashing of the bale was complete, "we're ready to sail. I'd like to be off to-night but the harbor guards would never let us pass down after sunset. In the

morning we'll be off and we'll anchor before night at the harbor entrance of the blind inlet that I'm going to slip through. Now I'm going to sleep a little. You fellows must keep guard alternately. Your orders are to let nobody come down the pier farther than that second check post."

Just then a section of artillery—two Napoleon guns—came hurrying to the pier and the lieutenant in command of it announced that he had orders to guard the ship until her time of sailing. "Which is she?" he asked.

Max pointed out the sloop, and the lieutenant, in some astonishment, said "Oh!" A moment later he added:

"Is that the best they could do for you? I'm counted a pretty good sailor myself, for an amateur, but I confess I don't envy you your voyage across the Gulf Stream in that tub."

"I have not said that we are going to cross the Gulf Stream," answered Max in quiet determination not to reveal the nature of his mission or his destination.

"Oh, of course," answered the lieutenant. "I only assumed that, seeing that you have cotton on board. Besides there seems to be an extraordinary concern at headquarters for the safety of your boat. My orders are not to permit any sort of craft, big or little, to approach within a hun-

dred yards of her, and to blow out of the water any boat that persists in trying to do so. I am ordered to challenge only once in each case and then to fire if the boat doesn't instantly go about. So I naturally infer that you are going on some mission of more importance than a trip around the harbor. However I didn't mean to ask impertinent questions."

But the lieutenant did mean precisely that, and Max Voxetter knew it. The lieutenant was in fact a brother of the quartermaster, and he was under quiet orders to find out all he could concerning the expedition.

But Max accepted his apology quite as if he believed it to be sincere, and then went to his two comrades and said to them aside:

"You two are to sleep in the little bunk room on board to-night. It isn't as comfortable there as out here on the pier, but discomfort is part of our job. With all these artillerymen on guard we needn't serve as sentries to-night. But while we sleep somebody may want to take a look at our charts. You see a glance at them would tell him just where we're going. So you two will sleep in the two bunks and I'll sleep on deck by the companionway. Keep your pistols handy and remember that no human being but ourselves has any business on board the boat to-night."

The boys understood. While waiting for bed time to come they inspected the sloop by the light of the torches more closely than they had done before.

"*Sairey Ann!*" said Tibe meditatively, reading the sloop's name, *Sarah Ann,* on her stern. "Well, she looks it. I would have called her the '*Sairey Ann*' just on general principles."

"But she's a good boat of her kind," said Max. "She has a very light draught when her centreboard is up, and for our purposes that is important. She's reasonably stout and I suspect that if properly handled she can show her heels to many a prettier boat. But, as your remark suggests, she is certainly not beautiful."

"No," answered Billy, "she may perhaps 'walk the waters' as the poet hath it, but certainly not as a 'thing of beauty' or a 'joy forever' or anything of that sort. By the way, Max, you've had her newly painted. Why didn't you select a better color? This looks like a bunch of dried sage leaves."

"That is just how I wanted it to look. It's just the color of the sea when seen at a distance, and so it isn't easy to see a boat of that color on the sea. There, I don't mean to make puns, but merely to explain. All the blockade running steamers are painted this color so that they shall

be as inconspicuous as possible at sea. I've carried the thing further. I've had the mast, the boom and even the sails painted the same color. You see I don't intend to fail in this enterprise if I can help it, and so no precaution is too small to take, no chance too insignificant to be provided for."

" You'll not fail, Max," said Tibe, with impressiveness, and somehow the assurance seemed a comforting one, though of course Tibe could see no further into the future than anybody else. He added, "You aren't the kind that fails, and you aren't beginning in a way to fail."

Somehow it all cheered the worn out and over anxious boy as he stretched himself upon the deck to sleep, leaving the two comparatively uncomfortable bunks below to his companions.

CHAPTER VII

Captain and Crew

IN the morning the lieutenant breakfasted with Max, and plied him ceaselessly with direct and indirect questions.

"What stores have you aboard?" he asked, adding by way of explanation and apology, "you see that's an important matter if your voyage is uncertain as to its duration."

"Oh, I think we have enough to see us through," was Max's noncommittal reply. "We shall probably run short of sugar, because of Billy Boker's inordinate craving for sweets"—as a matter of fact Billy detested sugar in every form—"but we have bacon and bread enough."

"How will you cook on your voyage?" asked the lieutenant. "For of course on a little sloop like that there's no cook's galley."

"No, of course not," answered Max still determined to parry the lieutenant's questions. "But I have some cooked rations on board, including a big boiled ham, and I have a brazier and some charcoal over which we can cook a little,

and then there is always the final resource of going ashore somewhere and cooking under a tree."

The lieutenant here lost his self possession. "Then you are not going to sea after all!" he said.

"I did not say that, Lieutenant," answered Max with a smile.

"But your words implied it," said the other.

"It is never safe to trust inferences," said Max, "particularly when the man from whose words you draw them is acting under confidential orders from the War Department, with special and very imperative instructions to let nobody know anything about his destination or the nature of his mission. Now, Lieutenant, I must bid you adieu. I will tell you this much of my purpose. I am going to drop down the harbor this morning."

With that he went aboard and ordered the sloop cast loose. The two boys, whom he had somewhat trained as sailors, at Bluffton, hoisted the mainsail and set the jib, and in a light breeze the sloop slowly made her way down the harbor. She passed between Castle Pinckney and Fort Ripley, where a guard came off to inspect the boat's sailing permit. She passed Fort Sumter where another guard boarded her for the same purpose. Then she turned her course southeastward, to-

ward James Island, and passed close under the guns of Fort Johnson. There the disposition was to enforce a rigid inspection. But Max had provided for that. He carried a slip of paper on which the following words were written:

"Special Order No. 23.

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH CAROLINA & GEORGIA,

CHARLESTON, *Oct.* 5, 1863.

"Sergeant-Major Maximilian Voxetter, in command of the sloop *Sarah Ann,* is proceeding, under special orders from the War Department, upon a mission of a confidential character. The officers in command of all forts and posts in and about the harbor, are hereby ordered to permit him to pass their posts at will by day or by night, and to put to sea, if that becomes in his judgment necessary, without molestation or delay of any kind whatever. This order is peremptory and applies to all persons of every rank.

By order of General Beauregard.

(Signed) THOMAS JORDAN,
Brig. Gen. and A. A. G."

This was "open sesame" of course, and Max was permitted to proceed. But the officer to whom he had presented this special order, looked with wondering eyes at the tub-like sloop, and muttered:

"Well, all I've got to say is that that young

chap will make a mistake if he puts to sea in that tub. I wouldn't go five miles out in her for the total value of her cargo."

That officer did not know Max Voxetter.

Max sailed his clumsy craft along the shore of James Island, which bounds the harbor on the southeast, inspecting the mouth of every inlet and creek, as he went. After awhile he suddenly changed his course and pushed his boat into a narrow channel that twisted and turned in an apparently hopeless confusion of ideas as to whither it wanted to go. The wind failing, he made the boys take some long poles which he had provided for that purpose, and with the aid of an outgoing tide, he had them push the sloop farther and farther down the tortuous channel. He meanwhile steered and gave necessary directions to his comrades. It was slow work, and at last, about two o'clock in the afternoon, he called out:

"Heave an anchor overboard, boys! The tide is turning. We'll lie here till it turns again, about eight o'clock tonight."

Then it was that Tibe Smith ventured upon the question that for hours had been haunting his mind.

"I say, Max," he said almost in a whisper, when the boat swung securely by her anchor line, "there's something on my conscience."

"All right," answered Max, smiling, for he saw that Tibe had something like a jest ready, "all right, unload your conscience at once."

"Well," said Tibe, with great seeming earnestness, "when that lieutenant was questioning you this morning about our supplies, you told him whatever you liked. But incidentally and quite casually you mentioned a certain 'boiled ham.' Was that true, Max? or was the ham a figment of the imagination?"

"Oh, the ham is actual enough," answered the boy, "but why do you ask?"

"Because of hunger first and curiosity afterward. Hunger prompts me to think that on a boiled ham we may make one more civilized and satisfactory dinner before you find it necessary to blow us into indistinguishable bits. I've lived on fish so long that even the rancid bacon we had this morning was a refreshment to my soul. And the thought of a boiled ham, a real ham, stirs all that is heroic in my nature. Give me a carving knife for sword, and I will advance upon that ham and assail it with a courage and determination that should commend me for mention in General Orders. Oh, Max! I pray you deceive me not! Is the ham a fact?"

Max laughed and went to the locker. Pres-

ently he produced the ham in visible evidence, and with it some army hard tack.

"See for yourself," he said.

"But I say, Tibe," interrupted Billy Boker, "you haven't given us the second part of your explanation. We understand the hunger, because we share it. But what about the curiosity of which you spoke?"

"Oh, well, that will keep till I've finished carving," said Tibe. And with that he filled the plates of both his comrades—tin plates—with the juicy Virginia ham. "Now," he said after tasting the dainty, "now I am prepared for any enterprise however arduous or desperate, and Max, I pledge you anew my undying friendship and devotion as a reward for furnishing us this ham. If you want anybody blown up, just mention your desire to me incidentally as it were, and I'll blow him up to your heart's content, even if the fellow to be blown up should happen to be Tibe Smith or Billy Boker, or you. A man fully fed on Virginia ham of this kind, after a fish diet of several months' duration, is ready for stratagems and spoils."

"But come back to your text, Tibe," interrupted Billy. "What about the curiosity? It seems to me you are as full of words as of ham."

"Oh, yes, of course," answered Tibe. "Well, my curiosity was stimulated to ask Max where he

got the ham. Of course no commissary ever issued anything of that delicious kind. He would have saved it for 'headquarters' and 'headquarters' would have meant his own mess. So, Max, 'fess up. You've been robbing somebody's smokehouse. Now—"

"Of course I have," answered Max. "But I had an accessory in the robbery. When I came to Charleston I naturally went to my father's house. It is deserted now, except that old Mammy Juliet is in charge. Well, old Mammy Juliet, while she does not suggest the passionate attentions of Romeos, is a dear old negro woman. She nursed me when I was a baby, and she can't get over the notion that I am a baby still. So she coddles me just as much as she did when I first began to 'take notice,' as she puts it. When she found that I was going away on this expedition, for I violated orders so far as to tell the dear old Mammy about it, she told me of this ham, which had lain for three years in hickory ashes in the smoke house. She lovingly got it out and boiled it for me, saying:

"'My precious chile, when de cannon balls blows up your innards they's got to find 'em well fed innards like a Southern gentleman's innards ought to be.' That's the history of the ham."

"Well, it is the very best history I ever

studied," said Tibe. "It beats Xenophon and Herodotus all to bits. It has 'more meat in it,' if I may so express myself."

After their dinner Max explained to his companions as he had not done before, his plans and purposes.

"You see," he said, "our first problem is to get to sea. The blockade is very close now and very watchful. The fleet just off the harbor has been strengthened and Stono Inlet, which bounds James Island on the south,—the island we are now on or in—is full of war ships. At night, I learn, the fleet crowds close up to all the entrances—particularly the mouth of the harbor and the mouth of Folly River. We are in a little branch of Folly River now, and the river runs into Stono Inlet."

"Then how do you expect to get out through the mouth of this river?" asked Billy.

"Well, it isn't a river and I don't for a moment think of getting out through the mouth of it. Wait a minute and I'll show you."

Max went below and brought up a sheet of paper about four feet square, on which was a sort of map dotted all over with little figures.

"This," he said, "is a chart of Charleston harbor and its connecting waters. It is made by the government at Washington. It shows everything in exact detail, with precise compass directions,

and the little figures show at every point what the depth of the water at that spot is at mean, or ordinary, low tide. Of course spring tides and neap tides are different."

"Tell us about them," broke in Billy. "I never did understand—"

"Not now," said Max. "I'll explain all that some day when we get out to sea, if we ever do get out to sea. Just now it's our only business to do that, and I want to explain to you how I plan to do it, because then you'll know how to help me do it. Now look here on the chart. Bear in mind that every line and curve here is mathematically exact. Now you see that this so called Folly River is in fact nothing more than an inlet running up here from Stono Inlet and cutting off Folly Island from James Island. It runs parallel with the sea and very near to it, as you see on the chart. And, as you also see, its upper or northern part, branches out into a hundred or more little creeks, lying very close to the sea and separated from it only by marshes that are scarcely out of water even at low tide. There are many shallow creeks that connect these upper waters with the sea itself. Most of them are dry or nearly so at low tide, while at high tide they have five or six feet of water in them. Very well. I intend to slip out through one of these to-night if I can.

I shall thus reach the sea at a point about half way between Stono Inlet and the harbor mouth, and of course the blockading vessels are concentrated mainly at those two points. At any rate they won't be watching these wretched little channels through which no vessel much bigger than this one could possibly pass."

"But is there water enough for us?" asked Tibe.

"Yes, if I can manage to find the channel I want. It has six or seven feet of water at high tide and a good heavy dew even at low tide."

"How much does the *Sairey Ann* draw?" Tibe would not call the ship by any other name than that. He insisted that she must be the "*Sairey Ann*," "because she looks it."

"Not quite four feet with the centre-board up," answered Max. "Three feet seven, by measurement, but when in motion a ship 'draws down' a little, as sailors say. That is to say, the impelling force, whether wind or steam, causes her to sink a trifle deeper when in motion."

"Then four feet of water is enough for us?" asked Tibe.

"Hardly. I should prefer five at the least. We want a little extra water under us for safety. Now I'm waiting till night for several reasons. First of all we can't do much in the way of sailing

in these narrow channels. Of course we can't 'tack' at all, and we must do that if we sail through a creek that changes its direction every twenty feet and pretty nearly boxes the compass every hundred yards. So we must depend mainly on the tide to float us out of here."

"That's so clear that even my nautically benighted understanding grasps it easily," answered Tibe, "but what's your 'secondly'? You see you gave us that as 'first of all.'"

"Well, it's a rather serious 'secondly,'" answered Max. "In the course of his efforts to find out my plans, that lieutenant told me this morning that the enemy is said to have crossed over to Folly Island yesterday. If that is so, he will of course establish pickets and send out scouting parties, and we may very easily stumble upon one of these, which would be awkward for us. In the night the chance of that is less than in day time."

"But, I say, Max," broke in Billy Boker, "how can anybody scout over marshes like these? Every man would sink up to his eyes in mud at each step."

"In boats," answered Max sententiously. "The first thing a capable commander trying to establish himself on this island would think of doing would be to send out boats to explore every wet place in these marshes. The one thing I am

now most anxious about is that. If we should happen upon a boat with ten or a dozen armed men in it, we should almost certainly have to blow up the bale marked Circle X. My hope is to slip out in the darkness without encountering any such boat's crew."

"But why couldn't we defend ourselves?" asked Billy. "We have our pistols, our Enfield rifles and that little boat howitzer."

"It's just like you, Billy," said Tibe, "to catalogue things in the inverse order of their smallness. You'd describe this ship's company as consisting of little you, big Max, and bigger Tiberius Gracchus Smith. And so in cataloguing our defences you begin with the pistols and wind up with the howitzer."

"In both cases," answered Billy in his deliberate way, "I should simply be conforming my speech to the wisest law of rhetoric. It would be a distinct anti-climax to begin with you and the cannon, pass on to Max and the rifles, and wind up with me and the pistols."

"That's all right, you fellows," said Max. "Only you mustn't carry it too far. I should have shouted with laughter over that sally if I weren't impressed with the necessity of keeping quiet while we lie here in the mud and marsh grass. In fact I'll confess that one of my chief

purposes in bringing you two with me on this expedition was to hear you spar with each other in intellectual fence. But just now I'll trouble you not to talk too loud. Your voice, Tibe, is like that of a fog horn, and Billy's flatter one has an incisiveness about it that makes it singularly penetrating. So please moderate your voices till we get out to sea. Save them for use in hailing a distant vessel if we happen to get wrecked."

"Oh, all right," said Billy. "But while we are under military discipline and must obey implicitly, I do not understand that our voices were regularly mustered into service and thereby made subject to orders. If I were as big as you, Tibe, I'd yell, just by way of asserting myself. I've seen babies do that lots of times."

"Billy," said Max, "I'm going to sleep for an hour. You and Tibe are to keep a sharp lookout and wake me if anything happens." With that he stretched himself out on the deck, with his head on a coil of rope and in an instant was sound asleep.

"Now I know," said Tibe, "why Max wanted us to suppress our voices. But do you really suppose, Billy, that you and I would know if 'anything happened' within the meaning of the statute he has enacted for our guidance?"

"Well, if a boatload of hostile men should sud-

denly board us, I fancy that the thought of waking Max would in some way find entrance into our minds. What's the matter with you, Tibe, that you talk so much nonsense?"

"I'm exuberantly happy, that's all," answered "T. G." as Billy sometimes called him. "We're off on a lark of the very larkiest kind imaginable, and it has set my blood tingling. Do you know, Billy, I've sometimes thought of deserting down there at Bluffton, and getting myself court martialed and shot, just by way of bringing some kind of variety into our intolerably monotonous lives. This thing suits me perfectly. Of course, I want Max's expedition to succeed, but incidentally I hope it will encounter all sorts of obstacles and difficulties and dangers."

"Well now, let me give you a bit of advice," said Billy. "Don't you give yourself the trouble of inventing any such incidents for the expedition. We are likely to stumble upon quite enough of them without your agency, to satisfy your most exacting desires. This job isn't going to be an easy one, or in any other respect a soft one. Max will stop at nothing to carry out his orders."

"Do you suppose I don't know that?" asked Tibe with unusual seriousness. "Don't I know Max Voxetter? Don't I know that if his orders required it he'd sail the *Sairey Ann* over the

Falls of Niagara, through the Maelstrom and up the rock of Gibraltar, and smile while he was doing it?"

"Your geographical references are somewhat —well let us say 'mingled'—" answered Billy, "but they very aptly suggest the temperament of Maximilian Voxetter. What there is to do he will try with all his might to do; what there is to dare, he will dare always with a calm mind and a complacent demeanor. That is why I am with him. I like to follow a leader whom I can respect as my superior in every way."

"Let's shake hands on that, Billy," said Tibe in a very earnest voice, "and in this undertaking you and I will see him through or die with him, won't we?"

"We'll do precisely that," said Billy with so much earnestness in his speech that his incisive, penetrating voice waked Max before his time.

CHAPTER VIII

The Battle in the Creek

WHEN the tide turned, between eight and nine o'clock in the evening, and began to run seaward, Max ordered "anchor up and mouths closed."

"This is the most critical point in our enterprise, boys, and absolute silence is necessary. We must get to sea to-night or we never will."

The night was very dark, with a heavy thunderstorm breeding. This was both fortunate and unfortunate. It helped Max to escape observation, but it also made navigation difficult in the tortuous channels he was trying to follow. Every now and then the sloop would run her nose into a bank covered by long marsh grass, but the mud was a soft ooze and at high tide was only a little less liquid than the salt water which constituted the major part of it. So, with the aid of the poles, the boys were able to extricate the ship and set her on her way again, in all of which the tide, now rapidly running out, mightily assisted.

For nearly an hour all went well, until Max at

last made out the surf ahead. Dark as the night was he could see that because of the phosphorescent glow that appears in Southern waters whenever the surface of the sea is broken. The outlet of the stream he was traversing was not more than two or three hundred yards distant, in a straight line, but in following the sinuosities of the creek Max knew that he must travel much further than that in order to reach the sea. Still, with the sea in sight the young soldier rejoiced, believing that his task was nearly done.

Just then half a dozen rifles broke loose from a boat not fifty yards ahead, and the little ship was peppered with bullets. The firing continued, and Tibe and Billy were about to reply to it with their Enfields, when Max stopped them. Max thought quickly, as it was his custom to do. He made out that there were ten or a dozen men in the assailing boat. "If we contest the thing with rifles," he thought, "they'll quickly discover our inferiority of numbers; then they'll board us; then good-bye to the bale marked Circle X and to everybody concerned. We must sink that boat or drive it away instantly." All this thinking was done in a moment. It was as quick as the flashes of lightning that were now bursting from the thunder clouds which had at last opened their batteries. By the light of those flashes, Max saw the assail-

ing boat and, to his delight, saw that she was alone.

"Don't shoot!" he ordered, turning to Billy and Tibe. "Load the howitzer quick with one charge of powder and two of canister. I'll point it myself."

It required a very few seconds to accomplish this, for the boys were experienced artillerymen who made no blunders and no false motions in loading a cannon. But Max, who was himself pointing the gun, did not at once give the order to fire. He waited till the next flash of lightning gave him opportunity to perfect his aim. Then he stepped aside and gave the word to fire.

No more musket shots came aboard and the next flash of lightning revealed a stream wholly clear of craft of any sort. Whether the double charge of canister had torn the boat into kindling wood, as it must if it struck her fairly, or whether the commander of the boat, upon discovering that the sloop was armed with a cannon had simply practiced ordinary discretion and pushed his boat into some slough for safety, Max could not at the moment make out. Indeed he had no time to speculate much upon that question. For his troubles were by no means at an end. The firing had attracted the attention of a Confederate light battery on picket duty on Morris or James Island—

Max couldn't make out directions sufficiently to know which—and that battery opened impartially on everybody concerned, pitching its shells into the melee in reckless disregard of the distinction between friend and foe. One of them exploded immediately forward of the ship, and Max, who had gone back to the tiller to work the ship out if possible, called out to Billy, "Go forward and see if we are damaged."

Billy went, and returning reported that the forward end of the bowsprit had been carried away, adding, "and the jib is hanging down like a dilapidated undershirt on a collapsed clothes line."

"Lower it then, at once," said Max. "Tibe, take both reefs out of the sail and then both of you come to the main sheet. We must get out of this quickly, and fortunately there's a good wind over the quarter."

The boys acted promptly, and while the firing continued for a time, it was directed at a position which the *Sarah Ann* had left, and therefore it did not endanger her. Max had a straight course to the sea now, and would have made it in a brief time, but for a cry of "help"—a very feeble cry—that came from just beneath the gunwale. He quickly brought the boat to and presently picked up a Federal soldier, nearly drowned and obviously fainting. There was of course no time to

lose in asking useless questions. Tibe drew the poor fellow aboard, and meanwhile Max set the boat's course again for the sea. She slipped out of the creek and was at last on the ocean.

She carried no lights, of course, except a mere firefly lamp in the binnacle by which to see the compass. The night was intensely dark, for the lightning had ceased and the rain was coming down in those torrents that are never seen or imagined anywhere north of tropical and sub-tropical regions. So heavy was the waterfall that had it been midday instead of midnight the sloop could not have been seen at a hundred yards' distance. The wind was strong from west-northwest, too, about the most favorable quarter possible, and Max was rapidly "making an offing"—as sailors say when they mean getting well away from shore.

"I say, fellows," he said to his companions, "we'll have no trouble with the blockader to-night unless we happen to run into one in the blackness. It's so dark and the rain is so heavy that I can't even see the mast yonder or the sail. Steady now, I'm going to change course a bit. Haul in the main sheet!" With that, as the boys tugged at the rope called the main sheet, which manages the sail, he so pointed the ship as to take the wind nearly abeam—that is to say, nearly straight

across her—and gave the order, "Lower the centre-board!"

The craft had heeled over so far when the course was changed, that the rescued Federal soldier rolled into the starboard scuppers. When the centre-board went down, the ship recovered somewhat, and Max said to Billy:

"You and Tibe look after the poor fellow as well as you can in the darkness. Find out if he is seriously wounded, won't you, or if anything can be done for him. We simply can't show a light to-night. We should be chased and caught if we did."

The boys went to the wounded man and found him somewhat recovered from the shock of his wetting, but quite seriously hurt they thought. Tibe reported to Max saying:

"A canister shot seems to have passed through the calf of his leg. No bones are broken, Billy says, but the frightfully lacerated leg is bleeding terribly and the man is nearly dead of exhaustion. Billy is working over him trying to stop the bleeding. He knows more of such things than we do, but he says it's hard to find what anything means in the dark."

"Tell him to do his best," was Max's order. "We simply mustn't have a light now. Hello! look out!"

With that Max suddenly changed the course of the sloop, and she well nigh capsized, as she slid by a blockading steamer, within a dozen yards of her.

"A second more and we should have smashed our bow into that ship's side. It was a narrow escape."

Just then the steamer fired two or three shots, but the *Sarah Ann,* speeding rapidly in the high wind, was already lost in the darkness and the shots fell harmless into the sea.

Billy reported that he had succeeded in stopping the flow of blood, and could do no more without a light.

"Well, you can't have a light," answered Max. "Even if it were you or Tibe or me that was wounded, I wouldn't allow a light. If we should show a glim that steamer would trip her anchors and be after us at full speed in ten seconds. So watch the poor fellow as well as you can, and in the morning you may be able to do something for him. In the meantime I'm going to try to be under the horizon to all the blockaders before daylight comes. That's why I am laying this course."

"How do you mean?" asked Tibe. "Isn't this our proper course?"

"Yes, and no," Max answered; "I'm sailing

nearly due northeast, and that is taking us rather away from our destination, which lies rather south of southeast. On this course we should go to the Bermudas, which lie six hundred miles due east of Cape Hatteras, while we want to go to Nassau, in the Bahamas, and that lies almost due east of the Cape of Florida, or about 700 miles south-southeast of us."

"But why are you laying this course then?" asked Tibe.

"Because I've found out the best sailing points of the *Sarah Ann,* at least when she hasn't her jib, and on this course she makes more knots an hour than on any other. My present purpose is simply to make all the offing I can in anywise manage to make before daylight. I want to get clear away from the sight of the blockade runners and if this high wind holds I'll do it."

"What do you reckon the wind at?" asked Billy, after he had again examined his patient.

"Half a gale from the west-northwest. By trimming the sail almost flat fore and aft, and laying my course just a trifle east of northeast, you see I get the wind between abeam and over the quarter."

"Pardon me," said Tibe, "but you really ought not to fling nautical terms in that reckless way, at a landlubber like me. What is 'abeam'? and

what particular part of the ship is the 'quarter'? You see I forgot to bring an unabridged dictionary along in my pocket."

"Well, 'abeam' means straight across the ship at right angles to the keel," answered Max. "The 'quarter' is the afterpart of the ship's side. When the wind is abeam it blows straight across the ship from side to side; when it is over or on the quarter it is blowing diagonally across and forwards. Now that I've acted as a substitute for your dictionary let me go on with what I was saying."

"Certainly, I'm all attention," said Tibe with mock humility.

"Well then," explained Max, "my purpose being to get as far out to sea and as far away from Charleston as I can before morning, I am laying my course with reference to speed alone, and without regard to the direction of our ultimate destination. I'm simply making all the offing I can while darkness lasts."

"And how fast do you think the dear old *Sairey Ann* is carrying us away from the blockading squadron?"

"I don't know. We have no log by which to test our speed; but in this hard blow I should think we are making six or eight knots an hour. Still that's all guess work. If I get an observation of the sun today, I'll be able to tell you better.

Anyhow I mean to get across the Gulf Stream in the quickest way possible. Then we'll lay the course for Nassau. It's coming on daylight now. So keep a sharp lookout for possible war ships."

CHAPTER IX

The Prisoner

NOT one of the boys had slept for twenty-four hours and the excitement of the night's adventures had severely strained their nervous systems of course. But the feeling that they had overcome the preliminary difficulties of their expedition, the thought that they had successfully worked their difficult way out through the blockade, and were now well away at sea, filled them with fresh buoyancy, so that they did not miss the sleep they had lost.

"But we are not through with that part of the job yet," said Max in answer to some congratulatory remark of Billy's. "We're out at sea of course and out of sight of the blockading ships. But some of them are constantly prowling about out here, and we shall not be reasonably safe till we cross the Gulf Stream."

"Tell us—" began Tibe.

"No, I won't," answered Max. "At least not now. We've too much to do. We've got that

poor wounded fellow to look after; we've got a smashed bowsprit to get in order; we've got to eat our breakfast, and when the sun comes up I've got to take an observation. It isn't light enough yet for anything but breakfast. So bring out the cold ham and some ship biscuit. We can't make coffee in this sea." For while the storm was gone and the skies were clearing, the wind was still fresh and the sea was running too high to think of lighting the brazier and trying to make coffee.

When the ham came Max altered the course of the ship to the east, and presently to a point or two south of east, for the wind had somewhat shifted and this was now the better course.

"Besides she'll ride easier on this course," said Max in further explanation.

He hastily swallowed some of the rich old ham, and taking two hardtack crackers in his hand, as the gray dawn advanced, he relinquished the tiller to Billy, saying:

"Here, Billy, take the helm. You see how she is pointing now. Keep her at that. But watch your compass carefully and don't let her vary two points from the course. I must inspect ship."

With that he went forward to examine the bowsprit.

"We can patch that up," he said half to Tibe and half to himself. Then he went below, and

after making a thorough search there he announced:

"She hasn't strained herself perceptibly. She's a sturdy old tub if she is ugly to look at. What she went through last night might very well have put a lot of water into a much handsomer ship's hold. As it is you can empty her bilge, Tibe, by ten minutes' pumping. Go and do it."

At that moment the sloop gave a sudden and violent lurch, going very nearly on her beam ends. Both Max and Tibe were thrown prostrate, and for the moment it seemed that the ship would capsize. Max hurried to the helm calling out as he took it, "What on earth did you do to her, Billy?"

"I don't know," said Billy, "or rather I know I didn't do anything to her. The sail suddenly crossed over from one side of the ship to the other, and the boom came within an ace of taking my head off. That's what happened. Of course I can't explain it."

"I can," said Max, "and it's only good luck that you didn't capsize us, or leave us without a mast. Look after the prisoner. It's light enough now. Report his condition to me."

It was obvious that Max was angry, and his anger was justified, for Billy had been inexcusably careless, and his carelessness had very narrowly

missed wrecking the vessel. What he had done was to let the sail jibe. That is to say, with the wind blowing from nearly astern and the sail boom reaching out to the starboard, or right side, Billy had carelessly let the sloop slew around till the wind caught the sail aback, and violently slung it over to the port side. In such a wind as was then blowing this manœuvre would, four times in five, capsize the boat or break her mast off at the deck and render her helpless.

Max explained all this to Billy after he had grown calm again. Billy frankly admitted his fault of inattention, but excused it by saying:

"The old craft was bounding along in the right direction, and it never occurred to me that she would change it. So I suppose I neglected to study the compass."

"Don't you know, Billy, that it is always the tendency of a boat to come around side on to the wind? Did you ever see a row boat go adrift in a wind?"

"Yes," answered Billy, "of course I have. But I don't see—"

"Well, did you ever know a boat adrift to fail to turn her side to the wind?"

"Now that I think of it, no," answered Billy.

"Well, it is the same with a bigger craft. When you got to mooning over some poetry or

something of that sort, and neglected your compass and your helm, the *Sarah Ann,* sailing with her boom to starboard—simply obeyed the natural instinct of all boats. She veered to starboard till she presented her starboard side to the wind. The wind presently caught the sail aback, and slung the boom violently over to port. If the *Sarah Ann* had two feet or even one foot less of beam—that is, were a foot narrower than she is—she would now be floating bottom up on the sea. And if I hadn't insisted upon having a new mast stepped in her before sailing, there wouldn't now be a stick on board. If this sort of thing had happened on board a regular sailing ship, the captain would have brained the helmsman with a belaying pin. Let it be a lesson to you. A man steering a ship should never take his mind off that one thing for a single second. He must watch the compass and the sails and the direction of the wind, which may change at any moment. His attention should be ceaselessly alert."

"I wish," said Billy, "you had played captain in earnest."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, I wish you'd knocked me down with a belaying pin. I'd have enjoyed that in comparison with the humiliation I feel for my blunder. Of course I deserve your censure, and I deserve

much worse than that. I deserve the belaying pin. For now that I have thought the matter over, I remember that you taught me all this at Bluffton. But that was in a small boat. Somehow, I suppose I thought that a bigger ship would behave better, just as grown up people are expected to behave better than little folks. So I let my mind wander, and fell into a mood of inattentive musing. I remember that I was thinking of the exquisitely beautiful dawn at sea after such a night of storm and stress of other kinds. Really, Max, you failed in your duty in not using that belaying pin on my head."

"I think I did, Billy," was all that Max answered.

All this talk occurred later in the day, however. When Max sent Billy, under censure, to look after the wounded man, Billy very carefully examined his wound, very thoroughly washed it in sea water and very tenderly dressed it. He found it less severe than he had thought in the night when he could judge only by the extent of the hemorrhage, and he found his patient a good deal recovered from his exhaustion, due to shock and loss of blood. He feared to give him ham to eat, lest it aggravate any tendency to inflammation that the wound might develop a little later. He could not give him condensed milk or a canned

soup, because in 1863 these products were not known. Yet the poor fellow must have something to strengthen him, something at once nutritious and easily digestible. After cudgeling his brains awhile, Billy remembered that there were a dozen or twenty eggs aboard, a gift to Max from old Mammy Juliet. He went to Max, made his report concerning the man's condition, and asked if he might give him one or two of the eggs.

"Certainly," answered Max. "Boil them very lightly."

"But how can I boil them?"

"Why, over the brazier of course."

"But in this sea—"

"You're not observant, Billy. The sea has gone down and the wind with it, unfortunately. I wish it would blow half a gale from the west for twelve hours to come. But it is blowing only a lady's breeze now and the ship's motion is very slight. So start a little fire in the brazier, boil as many eggs for the poor fellow as he can eat, and make him a cup of coffee."

Billy did so, and after the wounded man had eaten, his exhaustion seemed to pass away, so that, as he sat there propped up against the bulwark, he and Billy and Max were able to hold some little conversation. Tibe was forward, busily engaged in repairing the splintered bowsprit, and so alter-

ing the jib that it would accommodate itself to new dimensions. Tibe was full of mechanical ingenuity, and as soon as he had taken a good look at the splintered spar and the torn sail he had seen how they could be patched up so as to serve their purpose. He undertook the task of putting them in order, and was now busy with it.

The Federal soldier proved to be a rather handsome young man, nineteen years of age or about that, bright eyed, quick-witted and of very attractive manners.

"Captain," he said, addressing Max, "you fellows have been very good to me. I'm lucky, under the circumstances, to have been picked up by you. But let me remind you that you and I are on opposite sides in the war, and—"

"What of that?" asked Max, as he changed the boat's course a trifle. "You are wounded and of course we have no ill feeling—"

"Pardon me," said the young blue-coat, "that's just what I wanted to say. In a fight I should do you all the harm I could, and you'd do the same to me. And both would be right. Each of us owes an unquestioning service to his own cause. But I am wounded and a prisoner in your hands. Under your kindly treatment I am likely to grow better very soon, and as there are only three of you, and as you must do some sleeping, I might become a

dangerous person to have on board when I begin to hobble about again. I don't intend to be anything of the kind, but you can't know my intentions. You are kind to me, and I don't want my presence to rob you of your needed sleep. Yet you must throw me overboard, which would be a damply disagreeable proceeding to me, or you must tie me, which would be very uncomfortable to me, or you must guard me night and day, which would mean serious loss of sleep to all three of you, or else you must parole me. I quite understand that you fellows are soldiers and not ordinary blockade runners for profit. You are on some mission of importance to your government. If you leave me free it will be my duty as a soldier to do all I can to thwart your mission, even if I wreck the ship in doing it. I'm not able to stand now, but I probably shall be in a few days. I don't want to repay your kindness in saving my life and tenderly caring for me in any such fashion as that. So why not put me on my parole?"

Max looked at the open-eyed, manly fellow for a moment and then said:

"Mehercule! I'll do it! Give me your hand! Do you solemnly promise, on your honor as a soldier, that if I give you the liberty of the ship you will in no way seek to interfere with our purposes or make war of any kind upon us, but will con-

sider yourself a prisoner of war on parole until exchanged or released?"

"On my honor as a soldier," answered the young man, "I swear that I will keep absolute faith with you, and that I will not in any way, or under any circumstances do any hostile act towards you, or in any way seek to embarrass or interfere with your purposes, so long as I remain on board your ship!"

"You're a good fellow, I think," said Max, as he relinquished the wounded man's hand, "and although we are on opposite sides in the war, and although we must fight each other like men upon all proper occasions, and although of course you cannot share or help in our present enterprise, you are to be 'one of us' in all other respects. And, if we succeed in making a neutral port, as we hope to do, you'll cease to be a prisoner. I'll do what I can to procure transportation for you to New York or some other Union port."

"He's fainting!" said Billy. And he threw a handful of water into the face of the poor fellow, reviving him. Then he helped him down the diminutive companion way, and put him into one of the only two bunks the little sloop could boast.

CHAPTER X

In the Gulf Stream

THE storm had passed away, but heavy banks of cloud still lingered on the eastern horizon, so that it was ten o'clock before Max got a chance to take an observation of the sun. Then he leveled his sextant at the horizon, raised the arm of it till he caught the sun flash, and called out to Billy, whom he had set to observe the chronometer, for the Greenwich mean time. Billy gave it to him accurately, for Billy's blunder, and his shame over it had put him into a mood of accuracy and attention. Then Max figured a little on a bit of paper. Then he brought out a chart and made a pin prick in it after measuring carefully with a pair of compasses or dividers. Then he turned to the scale of miles on the edge of the chart, carefully adjusted the dividers and proceeded to measure off the distance between the pin prick and the mouth of Charleston harbor. Then he said:

"Well, I wouldn't have thought her capable of it!"

"What is it, Max?" asked Billy, who had minutely, but not at all understandingly observed his proceedings. "What is it you wouldn't have thought? and who is the lady to whom you refer when you say you wouldn't have thought her capable of it?"

"Why, the *Sairey Ann,* as Tibe calls her, of course."

"What has she been doing, to her credit or discredit, that you didn't expect of her?"

"Why, since we came out of that creek after midnight last night, she has sailed fifty-four knots, if my reckoning is correct. Wait. I'll take another observation. Watch the chronometer, Billy, and when I say 'now,' give me the exact time."

He brought the sextant again into use, and again made a calculation.

"It's all so," he said. "In nine or ten hours, we have really made fifty-four knots, thanks to a high wind in the right quarter and to the excellent gifts of the *Sairey Ann.* Boys, we'll be in the Gulf Stream by noon, even with this light wind, and as the blockaders almost never go beyond that, we'll feel that we have really and completely run the blockade." He carefully scanned the horizon with his glass, and then added, "There isn't a sail or even a smoke wreath in sight on the sea."

"But what is a knot, Max?" asked Tibe. "And how far is the Gulf Stream from Charleston?"

"A knot," answered Max, "is a nautical mile. Roughly speaking, it is about one mile and one-sixth as we measure miles on land. Now we have made fifty-four knots, and that is about sixty-three miles. The Gulf Stream lies about seventy miles east of Charleston—though it shifts a little—and we'll be in it before noon."

"How do you find out—"

"Tell us about the Gulf Stream—" began Max's companions.

"Not a word now. Not one of us has had a wink of sleep for nearly thirty hours, so you two are to go to sleep at once. In so light a breeze as this I can manage the boat by myself, but you'd better sleep on deck, within call. Besides it is very warm and you'll sleep better here than below. Anyhow one of you must sleep here, because our prisoner occupies one of the bunks and there are only two."

"But Max," said Tibe, "why not let one of us sail the boat and you get some sleep? You've had a rougher time than any of us."

"That's my duty," answered Max. "I shall not go to sleep till we are well into the Gulf Stream. Then I'll set you fellows at work. So

go to sleep now and be ready for duty when it comes."

The two boys were ready enough for sleep, for they were much exhausted. They rolled themselves in their blankets, with their clothes still wet from the last night's drenching, sought out the "soft spots on a hard pine deck," as Billy said, and were soon slumbering profoundly.

Max let them sleep till three o'clock. Then he waked Billy and put him at the helm.

"I'm going to sleep now, Billy," he said, "and I'm going to leave the ship to you. You know how to do all that is required, if you'll only give your mind to it."

"Thank you, Max, for trusting me. Be very sure I'll never blunder in that way again."

"No," answered Max, "I don't think you will. But equally you mustn't blunder in any other way. You are to hold this course, unless the wind shifts. In that case you are to change course so as to get the wind over the port quarter as we are getting it now. Of course if it should veer round to any easterly quarter you're to wake me. Also if it comes on to blow hard. Also if you discover a steamer anywhere. These are your orders. Now be careful."

"I will be careful," said Billy, "I've had my lesson."

The wind held fair, increasing somewhat, but still remaining a safe wind. Max slept soundly until six o'clock. Then he went all over the ship again, minutely inspecting everything.

"There's a little water in the bilge, Tibe," he said as he took the tiller. "You and Billy go to the starboard pump and pump it out. Then report and we'll have some supper."

"There's smoke off yonder," said Billy, "and I can see a steamer there too—or at any rate the upper works of one. The rest of her is below the horizon."

He was scanning the sea with a glass.

"Give me the glass," said Max, quickly taking it out of his hands. After a minute he lowered the glass and said:

"It's a Britisher. She isn't after us. Now we must have some supper. Bring out the cold victuals, and you, Billy, concoct something for our friend the enemy, and make a pot of coffee."

The two boys proceeded to obey orders. Tibe brought out some of the cooked rations while Billy made a little charcoal fire in the brazier, over which he made a pot of coffee for the crew and broiled some rashers of bacon for the wounded man. It wasn't quite the diet a doctor would have prescribed, but it was the best that Billy could do under the circumstances, and the

wounded man was rapidly regaining strength, so as to need robust food. He came on deck to eat his supper with the rest, and proved a good companion.

"How did you know that was a Britisher, Captain, and not a blockader?" he asked as he sipped his coffee. "She wasn't flying flags, was she?"

"No, of course not," answered Max. "But her spars told me all I wanted to know."

"How?" asked Billy eagerly.

"Why, all American ships have masts running to a point at top, and not many other ships have. British ships have particularly blunt masts. As this one's spars were not pointed, I knew she wasn't American. As they were particularly blunt, I recognized her as a British ship. But that isn't all. She has a foresail up, and it is painted a dirty red. No American ship paints her sails that color. Usually American ships don't paint their sails at all. But the fogs in the British channel eat up sails like moths on a piece of broadcloth, and so British ships often paint their sails with burnt umber to protect them. So do French ships. But now I'll tell you still more, if it interests you. I know the name of that steamer and I know the name of her captain. She is the *Cherokee,* blockade runner, and her captain's name is Watkins."

"Now how on earth did you find out all that at a distance of fifteen miles, by a minute's peep through a glass that allows you to use only one eye?" asked Tibe, in astonishment.

"Simply by paying attention," answered Max.

"But how?"

"Why, when I looked at her I caught sight of the top of her smoke stack. The smoke stack is painted a dull gray, as the ship is, but just at top British self-assertion shows itself in a little red stripe on the smoke stack. I've seen the *Cherokee* at Charleston, and the moment I saw that little red stripe, I knew her. She's going to run in before morning, or try to, and that's lucky for us."

"Why and how?" asked Billy.

"Why, because the blockaders will be too busy looking after her to come out here to bother us. The *Cherokee* is a more tempting bait in their eyes than the *Sairey Ann,* and of course they're expecting her."

"How so?"

"Why, they take pains to know when to expect her by knowing when she sailed."

"Couldn't they catch her out here?" asked Billy.

"No. She's faster than any of the blockaders for one thing, and she's an English ship for another."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Why, the blockaders have no right to interfere with a British ship on the high seas. That would mean war with England."

"But they know she's going to run the blockade."

"Yes, they know that to a moral certainty, but until she actually attempts to do it, they cannot interfere with her. You see she carries regular clearance papers; they are made out for 'New York and a market.' That means that her nominal destination is New York, but that she can go to any other port in search of a market for her cargo. The authorities at Nassau could not clear her for Charleston, because they have official notice of the blockade. But if she can manage to slip into Charleston she has a right to do it. But she tries that at her peril. While she is trying it the blockaders have a perfect right to capture her or to blow her out of the water if they can."

"Then how is it," asked Tibe, "that as you say, they might capture us out here?"

"Why, simply because the *Sairey Ann* is a Confederate craft, and the United States are at open war with the Confederacy. Their ships can capture or sink any Confederate ship anywhere except within three miles of a neutral country. That is why the blockade runner *Robert E. Lee* has to

take precautions against being captured at sea, which the other blockade runners need not. She belongs to the Confederate Government while the rest of them are British. As we are not British but Confederate we might be captured or destroyed anywhere on the high seas. But we're not in much danger now, as we are well into the Gulf Stream. So after supper I'm going to sleep for two or three hours more if this wind holds. I'll leave you to sail the boat, Tibe. You, Billy, had better lie down near Tibe and be ready to help him if he needs you. Otherwise get some sleep. We'll all need all the sleep we can manage to secure."

Then Max gave Tibe minute instructions. The wind was still blowing very moderately from the northwest and as Max was laying his course to the south-southeast, he had put her boom to port, and she was sailing very nearly before the wind. It was an easy course to hold and Max felt entirely safe in leaving the helm in Tibe's comparatively inexperienced hands. For while Max had taught both the boys all he could about sailing a boat down there at Bluffton, neither Tibe nor Billy was as yet very expert, and Tibe was less so than Billy. So Max chose this time of very easy sailing as a favorable one to put Tibe at the tiller and to let himself and Billy get some sleep. He bade Tibe

hold the present course so long as the wind held as it was and to wake him if it changed its direction much, or increased.

"One last injunction, Tibe," he said. "Take no risks whatever. Don't guess at anything. Don't hesitate to wake me if you are in doubt about anything, however small a thing it may seem to be. Remember how important our mission is."

With that Max rolled himself in his blanket and lay down on the deck about midships, with a coil of rope under his head for a pillow. Billy Boker was already sprawled out at full length and sound asleep, with no pillow whatever.

CHAPTER XI

The Prisoner's Story

MAX slept soundly and refreshingly till ten o'clock. Then after looking about him, he went below, lighted a diminutive lantern and made a thorough inspection of the ship. Before returning to the deck he "doused the glim," which is the sailor phrase for putting out the light.

"What is it you're looking for down there, Max?" asked Billy who had also waked up. "This is the third time you've behaved in that mysterious way. What are you looking for?"

"Nothing, and everything," answered Max.

"That's an ambiguous answer," said Billy.

"Why, I'm not looking for anything in particular, or expecting to find anything in particular. I'm only looking to see if anything is by chance wrong. You see it is the duty of a ship's captain to inspect every part of his ship very carefully at least three times every twenty-four hours, just to make sure that everything is right. I shall do that as long as we are at sea."

Here Max got out his instruments, and with them made some observations of the North Star, after which, by the light of the binnacle lamp he figured a little.

"What are you doing, Max?" asked Tibe.

"I'm making out the altitude of the North Star."

"What for? You're not going to take us in the *Sairey Ann* three millions of miles or so to the North Star, are you?"

"No, not tonight," answered Max. "But I want our latitude more accurately than I could get it today from the sun. Now let me take the helm and you two haul in the main sheet."

With that he changed the vessel's course to the south, bringing the boom inboard till the sail was trimmed nearly flat fore and aft—that is to say till it ran almost straight along the deck, slanting only enough to leave the outer end of the boom over the port gunwale. In this way he got the wind nearly abeam, and the *Sairey Ann* heeled over to port and quickened her speed.

The night was brilliantly starlit, more brilliantly lit than any one can conceive who has not seen clear nights in low latitudes, where the stars seem both larger and more multitudinous than they ever do farther north. The boys were in no mood for further sleeping, but strongly disposed

to talk. Even the prisoner, who was growing strong again, asked permission to crawl out on deck and "help listen," as he put it.

"Now finish what you were saying, Max," demanded Billy Boker. "We're nearly all ears."

"About what?" asked Max.

"Why, about your reasons for flirting with the North Star tonight. Tell us all about the thing. We don't any of us understand it unless our friend the enemy here does—by the way, we don't know your name and you don't seem 'the enemy.' Would you oblige us with a suggestion on that point?"

"Practically I have no name," said the youth in blue. "My name is Smith."

"What!" exclaimed Tibe, jumping up and warmly grasping the young man's hand. "Smith? Your name Smith? Why, that's my name! We must be akin—brothers or something of that sort! There! What did I tell you, Max? You see the very first fellow we have met since we left Charleston is a dearly cherished member of my own family. Where are your Voxetters and Bokers?"

Then turning to the wounded man, he said:

"My full name is Tiberius Gracchus Smith. What's the rest of yours, besides the Smith part?"

"My name is George," answered the boy, laughing a little.

"George Washington?" asked Tibe.

"No, just plain George. As a wounded prisoner in the hands of the enemy I don't feel as though I should want to call myself George Washington if that were my name, which it is not. But come, Captain, won't you explain about the North Star and latitude business?"

"No, not just yet," answered Max with seriousness in every tone of his voice. "That can wait till another time. Just now I want you to tell me, if you will, about that fight in the creek —your side of it I mean. What damage did we do with that double charge of canister?"

"Why, you blew the boat into toothpicks," answered the youth. "I never saw anything so complete in my life."

"And were all the men killed but you?"

"No. I think none of them were killed. You see your people had just withdrawn from that island, and ours had just landed on the lower end of it. So a number of boats were sent out that night to explore the little creeks and see how the land lay—or the water rather, for it's mostly water in there. Well, our boat had just pushed her nose out of a little slough into the creek, when the sergeant in command saw the *Sairey Ann,*

and ordered us to open fire. Presently, by a flash of lightning, he caught sight of you aiming the howitzer. Instantly he ordered us to jump overboard and swim into the marsh for our lives. Unfortunately I was a little slow, and wasn't quite out of the boat when your canister struck her. The range was so short that the canister shots didn't scatter much, but came all in a bunch into the boat, shivering her to pieces. I think all the other fellows got away, but one of the shots struck my leg, and I think I must have become unconscious for a moment. At any rate the next thing I knew the *Sairey Ann* was sailing almost over me and I called for help. It was very generous of you to stop and pick me up, for by that time that shore battery of yours was pounding you with shells. It was because of your generosity in that that I asked you to put me on my parole. Otherwise I might have lain around here, and hobbled about till I found some way of so harming you as to defeat your expedition. I didn't want to feel myself obliged or at liberty to do that with generous enemies who had risked everything to save my life."

"You have fully repaid us," answered Max. "And I am particularly glad nobody was killed by my shot."

"Why?" asked the other. "It was a shot

legitimately fired in war. And moreover we drew it upon ourselves by opening fire first."

"True," answered Max, "and I am not usually squeamish about such things. But somehow, now that I know you personally, I shouldn't like to think I had killed all your companions last night. Anyhow I am glad I didn't. War is horrible enough at best. One doesn't care to know precisely the effect of the shots he fires, even though he does fire them as a matter of imperative duty."

"I quite understand that," said George Smith, meditatively. "I have a special reason for it, for my case is rather unusual. That's how I came to be down on the South Carolina coast."

"If you don't mind, suppose you tell us about it," said Max. "But not if you'd rather not."

"I think I'd rather tell you," said the boy. He thought for a while, and then resumed:

"You see I am a Marylander, and like a good many other Marylanders, I have a brother on your side. There is only a year's difference in our ages, and we've been like twins all our lives. From our earliest childhood we have loved each other far more than brothers usually do. When the war came we differed in opinion for the first time, and as we were both conscientious there was no way in which we could come to one mind except by

one or the other betraying his profoundest convictions of duty, and we both agreed that that should never be. You see we had been brought up to obey our consciences and to do our duty as we understood it, regardless of consequences. He was profoundly convinced that the South was right in the war; I was equally strong in my conviction that the North was right, and each of us believed it to be his duty to fight for the cause he regarded as just. So my brother Jack went South and enlisted in your army, while I enlisted in ours. I had so great a dread of possibly meeting Jack in battle, that I went to the West to enlist. I served in Buell's army in Kentucky and Tennessee for a time, as a cavalry man, while I knew that Jack was serving in Virginia. But after a while my regiment was ordered East and set to work in Northern Virginia. One day a little squad of us were ordered to charge a Confederate picket. In the charge my horse was shot and I became a dismounted man in the midst of the picket. The Confederates had taken to trees and were fighting desperately to hold the post till help, which they knew to be near at hand, should come. I had made up my mind at the outset, that I never would be taken prisoner, so now that I was dismounted, I decided to die where I stood. I drew my pistols and began firing at every head I caught

sight of. It didn't last more than half a minute I suppose, but it seemed a long time to me. At last I decided to end it, and with a pistol in each hand I charged upon a fellow who was shooting at me from behind a tree. He fired as I made the rush, but missed me, and as he had only an Enfield rifle of course he was in my power, for he couldn't load again before I was on him. Just as I turned the tree, I saw him face to face. It was my brother Jack, and in half a second more I should have shot him. I can never tell you how completely unnerved I was. I threw down the pistols and decided to resist no more. Just then a large squad of our cavalry swept through the picket post, retreating before a much heavier force of your men. One of our officers, seeing me unhorsed, stuck out his hand and foot, after a fashion that all cavalry men are carefully taught. I seized the hand, put my toe on the extended foot and swung myself up to the officer's crupper. A few days later I asked for a transfer into an infantry regiment that was about leaving for the Carolina coast, and I secured it. That's the story, Captain."

Max could not utter one word in reply. There was something hard and painful in his throat. He held out his hand instead and pressed that of the prisoner. The other boys did the same.

It is not always necessary to speak in order to convey a generous thought. After a little while Max assigned the boys to their duty for the night, and there was no more talking.

CHAPTER XII

Tibe's Remarkable Calculation

THE wind gradually fell away during the night. Near morning it ceased entirely, except that now and then a diminutive puff of air would cause the sail to flap a trifle. There was still a ground swell on which caused the sloop to roll uncomfortably, now that she was not steadied by the draught of the sail. As she rolled, from one side to the other, back and forth, the boom began swinging to and fro in a way that seemed to Tibe, who was at the helm, to portend danger of some sort, though he could not guess what sort. Finally he waked Billy for consultation.

"Billy," he said, "Max told us to hold our course, but to save my life I can't do it. There isn't a breath of wind, and as nearly as I can make out by the compass we're heading almost due north just now. I've wiggled the rudder every which way but somehow I can't make this obstinate old *Sairey Ann* turn her head in any other direction."

"Of course not, and you perfectly know why Tibe. You know that unless a boat has steerage way, 'wiggling' the rudder has no more effect upon her than wiggling your long ears would."

"Willliam Boker," answered Tibe, solemnly, "will you never learn not to take Tiberius Gracchus Smith too seriously? You know that I know how and why a rudder steers a boat. Please don't deliver a lecture on the subject at five o'clock in the morning! That hour of the day, as I learn from a popular song, is sacred to the courtship of milkmaids by men with scythes over their shoulders. But answer the question that I waked you up to ask. Hadn't we better lower that mainsail or else lash the boom fast to the rail, or something? The way it swings about as the *Sairey Ann* wallows in this sea, I'm seriously afraid it will get hurt, or hurt something."

"If you ask my advice," answered Billy, "I earnestly counsel you to wake Max and leave the matter in question to his decision."

But it was not necessary to wake Max. That young gentleman was sleeping very lightly under his sense of responsibility, and he had been observing the behavior of the boom for several minutes past. Presently he called out, without raising his head from the coil of rope:

"Haul that boom in board and lower away the mainsail. Then make the boom fast. Let the jib stand. Make a light, Billy, and tell me how the barometer stands." For among the properties that Max had appropriated in his father's house, was a barometer, which he had securely fastened in the little companion way, where, in daylight at least, the man at the helm could consult it without leaving his post.

"Twenty-nine and eight-tenths inches," answered Billy after consulting the glass. Then he went to assist Tibe in lowering the mainsail and securing the boom.

Max, meanwhile, rose, went below, brought out his sextant and again "dallied with the North Star" as Tibe described his performance.

"Well, what does the North Star say to your advances this time?" Tibe asked when Max had finished his work.

"She reminds me," answered Max, falling in with Tibe's humor, "that I started to go somewhere to the south and far away from her, and that I haven't been doing it."

"Well?"

"Why, I find we are still in latitude thirty-two degrees, forty-five minutes north, or exactly east of Charleston."

"But how can that be?" asked Billy. "We've sailed southeast and south-southeast and all that sort of thing, for now these many hours. Why haven't we made any southing?"

"The Gulf Stream," answered Max. "We've not sailed in the directions you have named, Billy. We have only pointed in those directions. You see we've crossed the Gulf Stream and—"

"Have we?" broke in Tibe. "I didn't notice it. Did we cross over a bridge while I was asleep?"

Max paid no attention to this nonsense, but went on with his explanation.

"Mainly our course has been east, with some south in it, but as the Gulf Stream runs northwardly at a rate of from two and a third to four or five miles an hour, its current has almost exactly neutralized our southing, and while we have made most excellent progress to the east, we are no farther south now than when I shot George Smith. Good-morning, George!" to the wounded man who had come on deck without his shirt to ask one of the boys to pour a bucket of sea water over his head and shoulders. On account of his wound, Billy forbade him to take a completer bath.

"Good-morning, George! How are you? And how is that trouble in your leg getting on?"

"The whole of me feels very well indeed this morning," answered the boy. "As to the leg, I can't answer till Mr. Boker examines it."

"Now look here," said Billy, pouring bucketful after bucketful of sea water over the boy's head and shoulders; "I'm not Mr. Boker. In the addresses on the letters that people are good enough to write to me, I am 'William O. Boker, Esq.' But among my friends I am 'Billy,' and we've all adopted you as a friend."

"Thank you," said the boy. "I'll call you that hereafter, for certainly you fellows have been the best of friends to me."

When George had replaced his upper garments, Billy carefully removed the bandages from his wound and after minutely examining it reported that it was doing well, that there was no sign of serious inflammation perceptible, and that so far as he could judge—he not being a surgeon—it promised to heal satisfactorily! "But it will take a good deal of time, I suppose," Billy added. "That canister ball made a frightfully big hole, and as I understand it, nature must build up all the lost tissues or nearly all, before the thing heals. Anyhow I don't see anything the matter with the wound this morning, so I'll put on new bandages and let it go at that."

In the meantime Tibe had got a sea breakfast,

consisting of a pot of coffee, some sea biscuit and some rashers of not very palatable bacon.

"What are we going to do now, Max?" asked Billy as they sat at meal.

"Wait for a wind, and watch the barometer very zealously," Max replied.

"What's that last for?"

"Why, because a calm like this is apt to end in a sudden squall, and we must look out for that. The barometer is our only weather picket."

"Yes, I know," said Billy. "If the mercury suddenly goes down it's 'look out for squalls!'"

"Yes, and still more if it suddenly goes up above the normal thirty inches," answered Max.

"What an extraordinary instrument!" said Tibe. "Whether it rises or falls, it means bad weather! How does it tell you when the weather is going to be good? Or does it confine its attentions exclusively to a pessimistic prediction of bad weather?"

"Suppose I explain the thing to you," said Max. "You see in making a barometer you take a long glass tube, closed at one end and open at the other. You fill it with mercury, thus excluding the air. Then you place the open end of it in a little reservoir of mercury and turn the tube other end up. The mercury in the tube would instantly run down into the reservoir if the air

could get in at the closed end, but it cannot. As the mercury goes down it leaves a vacuum above. When it sinks to a point where the weight of the column of mercury exactly equals the air pressure on the mercury in the reservoir below—which is open to the air of course,—the column of mercury stops sinking. At the sea level that point is about thirty inches from the mercury level in the reservoir below. But the atmospheric pressure varies with the weather, becoming less as rain threatens, and so it cannot sustain the column of mercury in the tube at its normal height. The mercury sinks of course, and you look for rain. But when a cyclone or hurricane is approaching in otherwise calm weather, it pushes a great wave of air pressure before it, and the mercury is suddenly forced up an inch or so. When it suddenly jumps up in that way, it is high time to take in sail in a hurry. So take a look at the barometer, Billy."

"It stands about where it did before," the boy called out after he had examined the glass.

"Very well. We'll look at it again pretty soon. Now I'm going to take an observation," for the sun was now well up above the horizon. "Go to the chronometer, Billy."

After some figuring Max marked the ship's position on the map, with a pin prick, and said:

"We are well east of the Gulf Stream anyhow,

and when we get a wind we'll lay our course for Nassau."

"Was it absolutely necessary to cross the Gulf Stream?" asked Tibe. "Couldn't we have sailed down it, taking advantage of its current?"

"Yes, if we were making for New York," answered Max, "but as we are going the other way we couldn't. You forget, Tibe, that the Gulf Stream runs northwardly, while we want to go the other way."

"Oh, yes, I forgot that. I always think of north as up, and south as down," said Tibe. "They always make it that way on a map."

Max laughed, and then added, "You see if we had undertaken to sail southwardly up the Gulf Stream, we should have made very little progress indeed, for the current out there is just about equal to the *Sairey Ann's* sailing speed in a fair wind."

"What is the Gulf Stream, anyhow?" asked George.

"It is a river of warm water in the ocean. It flows from the Gulf of Mexico—some trace its origin to the mouth of the Amazon—northward and eastwardly. There are various opinions as to where it ends, for it spreads out as it goes north, till it becomes indistinguishable. Some observers have believed they could trace it as far north and east as the coast of Norway."

"But what causes it?" asked Tibe. "I never did know."

"And probably you never will," answered Max, "for nobody else ever did. There are six or eight different theories about it, all of them speculative and all of them unsatisfactory."

"Would you mind telling me how you find out where we are with the machine you call a sextant?" asked George Smith. "I never was at sea in my life except on the transport from Fortress Monroe to South Carolina."

"Oh, no, not at all," Max responded. "I won't go into details—they would be too complex—but I think I can make you understand the principle, without that. See here," taking up the sextant. "You see this tube is a little telescope. Attached to it is a brass segment of a circle, carefully marked off into minutes and seconds of the circle. This arm moves easily along the brass piece. In the arm is a little mirror as you see. Here on the fixed part of the instrument is another. These mirrors are adjusted with mathematical accuracy, so that if you look through the glass directly at the horizon and move the arm, the one mirror will reflect the sun into the other and thence into your eye at the exact moment when the arm reaches the right place on the brass piece to indi-

cate the height of the sun above the horizon. Then by looking at the brass sextant you see at a glance just how high the sun is. That tells you what time it is at the point at which you stand. Your chronometer tells you what time it is at Greenwich in England. Subtracting the one from the other, you find how many hours, minutes and seconds there are of difference between the two. Of course you know how to work the ordinary arithmetical rule for converting time into longitude and longitude into time?"

"Oh, yes, of course," answered all the boys in a breath.

"Well, then, you see how you work out your longitude by an observation of the sun. The process of getting your latitude from the sun is rather more difficult, but I'll explain that some other time. The easiest way to get the latitude in the northern hemisphere, is to take an observation of the North Star. The altitude of that above the horizon is almost exactly your latitude—not exactly because the North Star is not exactly at the celestial pole, but is very near it. Astronomers make careful allowance for that difference, but ordinary ship masters accept the pole star altitude as near enough right for their purposes. You can also get the latitude from any fixed star, but we won't go into that now."

"I'd like to try that operation, Max," said Tibe "I believe I could do it."

"All right. Suppose you try it. I'll give you the latitude—in fact you know it already. It is thirty-two degrees, forty-five minutes, north. Now take the sextant and see if you can work out the position of the ship."

Tibe took his observation, Billy giving him chronometer time. Tibe figured for a while and then called out:

"I make it 76 degrees, 24 minutes east longitude. Isn't that about right?"

"Well, if it is," answered Max, "the *Sairey Ann* is the most remarkable sailer I ever heard of."

"How so?"

"Why, if your reckoning is correct she has in less than two days' time sailed across the Atlantic, through the Mediterranean and overland to Central Asia, and moreover, instead of being about nine o'clock in the morning where we are, it is in fact about eleven o'clock at night. It's wonderful how much one learns from a scientific calculation —sometimes."

Tibe went over his calculation again, and, with a puzzled look, slowly said:

"It does beat all, but I did the sum right, and figures won't lie."

"Oh, yes, they will if you treat them badly as you've been doing," answered Max.

"How do you know that? You haven't even looked at the paper."

"I don't need to. I know, without looking, what your error is. You have added our actual time to the Greenwich time, as indicated by the chronometer, when you should have subtracted it instead. That makes an error of just twice the difference between Greenwich time and ours, and flops the *Sairey Ann* to a point as far east of Greenwich as she ought to be west of that meridian."

The boys laughed heartily at Tibe, but Tibe knew how to take a laugh, and by himself making jests about his own error, he avoided their teasing. Better still he resolved to try the experiment every day until he should learn how to work out the ship's position correctly. Max was glad enough to help him and long before the voyage was over, he could calculate both latitude and longitude almost as well as Max himself could do it.

CHAPTER XIII

Windward Work

ABOUT the middle of the afternoon, Max, whose companions thought him asleep, as he lay there flat on his back on the deck, called out:

"Hello, here's a breeze. Hoist the mainsail, boys." With that he sprang up, went to the tiller and observed the compass bearings.

"It *is* a breeze," said Billy, "but it's certainly a very little one, so small that I didn't observe it till Max formally announced its presence."

"It will grow up presently," said Max, "and by ill luck it is coming nearly straight out of the south-southeast."

"May I ask, Captain," said George Smith, "why you regard that as unfortunate?"

"Why, south-southeast is our course—the direction we want to go, so that this is a direct head wind, and it's going to blow up strong presently, the barometer says. Never mind. We shall now see what the *Sairey Ann* can do in windward work."

"Do you mean that you can sail in the direction

from which the wind is coming?" asked George who knew nothing whatever of sailing.

"Yes and no," answered Max. "Of course, I can't sail straight into the wind, but by sailing a little slantwise we can make headway in a direction—wait a bit and I'll try to explain it. Haul the boom over to port, boys. There. Now haul in the main sheet till the boom rests over the rail."

The breeze was growing stronger by this time, the sail filled, the sloop heeled over a little to port, and began to forge ahead.

"Now," said Max, "you see, George, the wind is coming out of the south-southeast, but by pointing the ship's nose to the east of southeast, and trimming the sail nearly fore and aft, we can make headway, not straight toward the wind, but in that general direction. After a while I shall go about and take the other tack pointing southwest or about that. In that way we shall regain what we have lost by sailing too much to the east. After a while again I shall change back to my present course and so on as long as the wind blows from its present quarter. Zig-zagging in that way, we shall all the time be making more or less headway on our destined course. We call that 'tacking' or 'beating to windward,' or 'sailing on the wind.'"

George looked and thought for a time, waiting

till Max should "go about"—that is to say change from his present course to a southwesterly one—before asking further questions. He observed the behavior of the ship very closely as Max at last brought her head up to the wind. He saw the boom swing inboard and the sail flap idly. As the ship went a little further about, the wind caught the sail on the opposite side, filled it, and then, heeling over to starboard, the sloop began again to forge rapidly ahead.

"We call that 'going about,'" explained Max to the interested George. "You see when I brought her head straight up into the wind the sail lost all its wind and simply fluttered. We call that 'going in stays.' But the boat still had headway enough for steerage, and by the use of the tiller, I carried her head further over to the west until the sail caught the wind on the port side, and filled again."

"That's very clear to me now," said the boy in blue, "but there's one thing I don't understand. How does the wind, blowing from the side, against a sail, push the boat forward? I should think it would drive her to the side."

"Perhaps I can explain that. When the wind pushes the boat sideways or nearly so, the resistance of the water against her hull and centre-board, if she has a centre-board, constitutes an

opposing force, and if the two forces are properly adjusted and the boat is properly shaped, the combination of the two drives her forward. Of course she pays off a good deal at best—I mean she slips over to leeward—towards the side opposite the wind,—and so she does not sail really quite in the direction in which her head is pointing. If this boat had no centre-board she wouldn't beat up at all. She'd simply drift sidewise and backward. That's because she sits very shallow in the water, so that her sides and bow do not offer enough resistance for beating. That is why she carries a centre-board."

By this time the wind had risen sharply, and the water was rushing with a hiss along the boat's sides.

"Even with her centre-board," added Max, "she doesn't beat very well, and we're making very little headway."

"Why, she seems to be sailing extremely fast," said the boy, "faster I should think than at any time since we started."

"Seems to be, yes. Yet she is making very little progress in the direction we want to go. You see she doesn't point up well, and she pays off a good deal. So that while her actual speed is great, most of it is lost or neutralized by her slipping to leeward."

"What is 'pointing up'?" asked George, who seemed interested in the art of sailing and anxious to learn what he could of it.

"Why, you see, when sailing on the wind we want as much as possible of our headway to be in the direction from which the wind is coming. So we point the ship's head as nearly as we can toward the wind without losing the force of the wind on the sail. If the luff, or inner edge of the sail, the edge nearest the mast, begins to tremble, we know that we are pointing up too much, and thereby losing the force of the wind. In that case, we let her go off a trifle till the sail stands quite steady. Now some boats can be pointed up much closer than others, and they of course make greater progress into the wind."

"Why is that, Max?" asked Billy. "I've noticed the difference in that respect in our sailboats at Bluffton, but I never understood the reason."

"It is due to the model, or shape of the boat. The *Sairey Ann* was not built for a racing yacht, and she points rather badly. Here, Billy, you and Tibe come to the tiller. I must take an observation before sunset to find out how far east of Chinese Thibet we've managed to get by this time."

"Oh," answered Tibe good naturedly, "you needn't imagine that you can get any such sailing

out of the *Sairey Ann* as I did, although you were brought up to the business. It takes a genuine landlubber to do that."

"I should think it did," said Max as he leveled his glass at the horizon."

After a rather long calculation, Max said:

"I apologize to the *Sairey Ann*. Her windward work is much better than I imagined." Looking at his watch he added, "In less than three hours she has made nearly seven miles of southing to two miles of easting. That is to say if I have the latitude correctly. I'll test that when the stars come out. I didn't think she could do it even in the stiff wind we've had. It is going down with the sun, however, and we sha'n't get much out of her tonight. I hoped it would hold, but I didn't much expect it. In weather like this the wind usually goes down with the sun. Fortunately it is apt to come up with it also."

"Why is that?" asked Billy.

"Now you've asked a question that I fear I am not learned enough to answer," said Max. "It is an observed fact, however, not only at sea, but on inland lakes as well. Heat and cold have something to do with it I believe, but I really do not understand such explanations as I have heard."

"Hello!" he added presently, observing the compass, "that's good luck anyhow."

"What is?" asked Tibe. "Max, you're under obligations to inform us of every piece of good luck that befalls us, lest we should not notice it. We're sure to observe all the bad luck that comes aboard. So tell us what the good luck is."

"Well, now suppose you come here to the tiller and with the aid of the compass see if you can't work out the answer to your question for yourself," said Max; "but first haul in the main sheet a little more and trim her nearly flat fore and aft."

Tibe obeyed and after a while he said:

"I begin to suspect myself of a glimmering idea of what you mean. The wind is shifting to the west."

"There isn't any Central Asia in that calculation," said Max, laughing a little. "The wind is steadily working around to the westward, and if we get it due west or from any point north of west, we shall have no more windward work for this time, and the *Sairey Ann* will make more knots ahead in an hour than she could in three the other way. Now I'll take the helm again while you and Billy get supper. We can't make coffee in this sea," he said, for the ship was rolling and pitching a good deal.

"I think I can," said Tibe, "if you'll let me try."

"I think you can't," answered Max, "without spilling your pot and perhaps scalding yourself."

"But I have worked out a plan, and anyhow I'd like to try it."

"Oh, very well, try it, but look out and don't scald yourself. We don't want another helpless man on board."

"I'll be very careful," said Tibe, "and you will be admiringly grateful when I present you with the proof of my genius, in the form of a cup of steaming hot coffee for your supper."

With that Tibe went below, mixed the coffee, put it in the coffee pot and set it aside while he kindled a little charcoal fire in the brazier. This was nothing more than a tinsmith's fire pot, with a bail like that of a bucket, by which to carry it about. To this he securely fastened a stout bit of cord, and coming on deck again, he swung the fire pot to the boom, a foot or two from the mast. This left it free to hold its perpendicular pretty well, despite the motion of the ship; and Tibe managed to make a pot of coffee and to fry a large panful of salt pork "just as a change from the bacon," he said.

"Where did you learn that trick, Tibe?" asked Max. "It strikes me as very clever."

"I didn't learn it at all," answered the tall boy. "I just thought it out for myself."

"All the more then," said Max as he drank his coffee, "is my gratitude mingled with admiration, as you predicted that it would be."

"I'll tell you what it is, Max," said Billy Boker, "we've got a man of genius aboard. For any man who can sail the ship six thousand miles, partly overland in less than two days, and then cook a hot supper, with coffee, in a sea like this, is to my mind a Shakespeare, an Isaac Newton and a Ben Franklin all in one."

"Good!" shouted Tibe, for at that instant the ship gave a specially heavy lurch to leeward, upsetting Billy from his seat on the companion way hatch, and spilling about half his pint of coffee into his bosom and lap. "That's what you get for making fun of a poor, feeble minded fellow. Didn't they teach you when you were little—well never mind, you're little yet. So let me give you some more coffee."

The wind was now no more than a stiff sailing breeze, and as it had come round to the west, Max laid his course south-southeast, with the boom out to port, and took the wind over the starboard quarter—about the best direction from which it could come for his purposes.

When the stars came out Max took an observa-

tion for latitude, confirming his reckoning, and expressed himself satisfied with the performance of the *Sairey Ann.*

"If this wind would only hold in this quarter, boys, we'd be at Nassau in five or six days," he said, as he lolled on deck with his head and shoulders resting against the bulwark.

"How far is it from where we are?" asked one.

"About six hundred miles, and we are making, I should say, about five or six miles an hour now or nearly that—say about a hundred miles a day or perhaps a little more. But of course all such reckoning is futile."

"Why?"

"Because it rests upon the uncertain and very improbable presumption that we shall keep a wind like this from a favorable quarter for six consecutive days, and pretty certainly we shall have no such extraordinary luck as that. We are liable to head winds, storms, squalls and calms. So if we get to our destination before I wake, let me know. Hold the course, and be watchful. I'm going to sleep awhile."

CHAPTER XIV

The Behavior of the Sairey Ann

ALL night long the wind held fair, a stiff sailing breeze from the west. About sunrise, as Max had anticipated, it shifted to a point a little farther north and rose to half a gale.

"It is from the right direction, fellows, and the *Sairey Ann* likes it. If it holds in this way we'll make a good deal more than our hundred miles today. But I don't know"—doubtfully and scanning the sky and the sea.

"What is it you fear, Max?" asked Billy.

"Nothing. I never allow myself to fear anything. It doesn't become a man to fear."

"Oh, I didn't mean that you were scared. You never were in your life, I think. I used the word fear in the other sense, as when we say 'I fear it's going to be very warm' today. But what is it that you—let us say—apprehend?"

Max did not answer at the moment. Presently he gave the order:

"Take a reef in the mainsail," and with that

he changed the boat's course slightly, so as to ease her up a trifle—that is to say, so as to take the wind a little less directly on the sail.

There were four rows of reef points fastened to the sail, the rows running across it and the points hanging down. By tying two of these rows of points together and drawing what Tibe called their " roots " close together, the boys shortened the sail by exactly the distance between the two rows. At the same time of course they lowered the top of the sail by the same amount. Meanwhile both the wind and sea were rising, and Max, at the helm, anxiously watched the behavior of the boat. This continued for an hour perhaps, the wind steadily increasing.

There was no talking, of course. The boys saw that the work of navigating the ship was absorbing quite all of their captain's attention, and as for themselves it required alertness to keep from being hurled to the deck or washed overboard by the waves that now and then came aboard.

" Close the companion hatch and make it fast! " commanded Max. When they had accomplished that he said:

" Inspect the lashings of the bale marked Circle X, and see that they are secure."

It was half an hour before he spoke again.

" Take a line and lash George Smith securely,

to the bulwarks amidships. You see after all, George, I've got to tie you."

"What for, Captain?"

"For safety. We're in for a big blow and a tremendous sea, and crippled as you are, you might be washed overboard, or get your bones broken on deck. Look out for yourselves, boys, and be very careful."

All was silence again for a time. The wind grew continually fiercer, and Max was all attention to his difficult task of navigating the ship in what was now a whole gale from the northwest. At last he commanded:

"Take another reef in the mainsail. Be careful in doing it, or you may drop overboard."

It was a difficult task for the untrained boys to accomplish, but after a hard struggle they achieved it. The sloop was now pitching and rolling mightily and seemed like a chip or cork, nearly helpless on the angry surface of the sea. But she was not helpless, and Max was steadfastly holding her to her work, so that she seemed to be rushing at railroad speed through the surging waters. The boys were delighted with the new and wild experience, none of them having ever before been at sea in a gale. Max, with brows knitted and lips almost painfully compressed, was

giving no attention to anything but his difficult work.

Presently the boys observed a marked change in the boat's behavior. Searching for the cause, Billy saw, and called Tibe's attention to the fact that instead of sailing before the wind, she was sailing, close hauled on the wind.

"The wind has gone clear around," he said, "and we're beating up against it."

"Take a squint at the compass, Billy," said Max quietly.

Billy did so and cried out, "Why, we are sailing almost due north."

"Yes," said Max, "I changed the course nearly half an hour ago, but you didn't observe it. That was bad seamanship on your part. At sea you must observe everything that happens, particularly in a gale of wind."

The boys felt guilty, for Max had often warned them against inattention as a very dangerous thing at sea. So they said nothing for the next two hours. At the end of that time the wrinkles between Max's eyes disappeared, his lips, which had been so closely pressed together that the color had gone out of them, relaxed, and with a smile he said:

"The gale will go down presently."

"Why do you think so?" asked George Smith

from his seat on the deck where he had been securely lashed to the bulwark.

"I know it," said Max.

"But how?"

"By the barometer. The mercury is rising, and the gale is already diminishing in force. Go to the pumps, boys, and see if there's any water in the bilge. She may have been strained a bit in this tussle."

By the time that the pumps ceased to draw, the wind had gone down to a stiff sailing breeze, but Max did not bring the boat back to her course. Observing this Billy ventured to say:

"Max, you haven't yet answered the question that I wanted to ask an hour or so ago."

"What was it? I don't remember that you asked any question."

"I didn't. I was afraid of the belaying pin treatment. But I wanted to ask, simply in aid of my instruction as a sailor, why you changed course to the north."

"Because I was 'afraid' as you put it, of a following wave. You see the bow of a boat is made to breast seas and ride over them. The stern is differently constructed. A following wave is one that comes from behind, and in a sea like this such waves are very apt to come aboard over the stern—sometimes with force enough and

weight enough to crush the deck. In fact a following wave is one of the very worst dangers that a ship can encounter. I held my course nearly before the wind till the sea rose so high as to threaten us in that way; then I brought the ship's head around to the wind and I shall hold her there till the sea goes down somewhat, which it will do in an hour or so, now that the wind has abated."

"Then we're sailing back over our course and losing all the southing that the *Sairey Ann* made by her splendid sailing last night and today!" said Tibe in disappointed accents.

"Not at all," answered Max. "We are making very little more than steerage way on this course, and you see I am keeping the sail reefed down close, so as to make as little way as possible while we're headed wrong. In an hour or less I'll take out the reefs and change course. Meantime take the helm one of you, and let's see where we are."

Max's observation of the sun showed that the *Sairey Ann* had made about a hundred and fifty miles to the south-southeast since the morning before and the boys were satisfied.

"The *Sairey Ann* is behaving so beautifully," said Tibe, "that I'm almost sorry I nicknamed her."

"That's true enough," said Billy, reflectively.

"But after all the *Sairey Ann* has had no choice but to behave well. It was Max who behaved well. But for his skill, sagacity and constant care, the *Sairey Ann* would have gone to the bottom of the sea hours ago."

"Oh, no, she wouldn't," said Max, who sat resting on the companion hatch after his long strain of anxiety and hard work—for there is genuinely hard work in steering a sloop in such a wind and sea, particularly when her helm is a mere lever instead of a wheel.

"Why wouldn't she?" asked George Smith. "And please, Captain, can't I be untied now?"

"Y-e-s, I think so," answered Max with some doubt in his tone. "Yes, if you'll be very careful. The sea is still very high and will remain so for a considerable time. But if you'll be careful you may be released. You see I don't want to lose my prisoner just yet. Billy, untie him."

"I certainly don't want you to lose me just here," answered the boy cheerfully.

"But tell me, Captain, why wouldn't the *Sairey Ann* have gone to the bottom if she hadn't been carefully handled in such a storm as that?"

"Simply because she can't sink so long as her frame holds together," answered Max. "She is stuffed completely full of cotton bales and cotton bales float. They are so tightly pressed that they

can't absorb water—except very, very slowly. If the *Sairey Ann* hadn't been carefully handled she would have capsized and become a water logged derelict on the sea. But she wouldn't have sunk. She would have drifted with the ocean currents a constant source of danger to other ships, till some storm had driven her on shore, or some war vessel had blown her up as a dangerous object to have floating round on the sea."

Max paused and carefully observed the sea. Then he said:

"Let out those reefs, boys. I'll take the helm."

This time the boys observed the fact when Max brought the ship around to her southerly course. They had learned the lesson of alert attention which is to seamanship what the multiplication table is to mathematics.

"Now let out the main sheet. We'll let her run free before the wind."

As soon as the sheet was fully out, the sail at right angles with the keel, and the course laid straight before the wind, the ship came up on an even keel and lost most of her disagreeable motion. The wind was strong from a little west of north, but the sea, though still high, had ceased to be turbulently so. Max inspected ship and found a good deal of water in the hold. Evidently the ship had been somewhat strained, and it required

quite two hours of constant pumping to free her of water. In this George Smith, the boy in blue, insisted upon helping.

"Although we are on opposite sides in the war," he said, "we're literally 'all in one boat' now, and I'm quite strong enough by this time to help pump that boat out."

The boys were glad enough of his help, for he was a strong, muscular fellow, and pumping is exceedingly hard work. They rejoiced in their supper too when the pumping was done. And after supper they sat long on deck under the stars and the young moon, talking, talking, talking, as boys will, before stretching themselves out for sleep.

CHAPTER XV

In the Trades

THE weather continued favorable for the next four or five days. The wind was light but it came from favorable quarters. The sea was calm and friendly, and the moon was more than half way to the full.

Except for the easy work of sailing the ship, the getting and eating of very simple meals, and a little pumping now and then, there was nothing for the boys to do but talk. And how they did talk, especially of evenings on deck! For here were four intelligent and pretty well educated youths, who, as soldiers, had been matured beyond their years by such experiences as do not usually come to boys of their ages. Thrown together on the deck of a diminutive ship, on a placid sea, in a deliciously warm climate and under a far southern moon's brilliant shining, they naturally and necessarily talked of everything that might arise to interest their minds.

Little by little the southern boys had come to know George Smith almost as well as they knew

each other, and the more they knew of him the better they liked his generous, frank open manliness, his high sense of honor and duty, and his unusual intelligence. He had by this time come to be quite one of themselves and was accustomed to take his full share in their conversations, especially when any subject arose on which he happened to be better informed than they.

"How steadily the wind holds from the northeast," he said one evening.

"It's the trades," said Max.

"What's that or what are they?" asked Tibe.

"Why, the trade winds. Sailors usually shorten the name down to 'trades.'"

"But what are the trade winds?" asked the three in a breath. "You see, Max," added Billy, "we're a fearfully ignorant trio—at least at sea. We're apt to think ourselves quite well up when we're ashore. But out here we're babes and sucklings and you are our kindergartner."

"Well," said Max, "the trade winds are winds that blow steadily, almost the year round, from northeast to southwest on this side of the equator and from southeast to northwest on the other side."

"What makes them behave in that astonishingly well bred way?" asked Billy. "You see my experience with sea weather has been confined

to this one voyage, but my observations so far have taught me that the wind on the face of the great deep is a turbulent, irrational, atmospheric insanity capable of any thing in the world but repose or steadiness of any kind. I had quite settled myself in that belief, and now here you come telling me that this gentle northeast wind does this thing pretty nearly all the year round. Come, explain, Max."

"That's because you generalize too hastily, Billy; you draw your conclusions from too small a body of facts."

"Oh, never mind explaining to me that I'm an ignoramus. I knew all that before. Devote your energies to the more profitable work of enlightening my benighted intelligence."

"So far from the wind being always inconstant, it is a thing to be reckoned on with a good deal of confidence. So far from being always angry, it is in many parts of the world a gentle as well as a most serviceable friend of the sailor. In the North Atlantic for example, high northwesterly gales are confidently expected except during a few months of summer, and sometimes even then. A little further south there is a strip called the 'horse latitudes,' subject to frequent and prolonged calms. Sailing ships have been known to lie there for weeks 'whistling for a

wind,' as sailors say. That was before the ways of the wind were studied and mapped out. Nowadays sailing ships take pains to keep out of the horse latitudes so far as they can."

"Why do they call that region 'horse latitudes'?" asked Tibe. "I never saw a horse becalmed unless he was dead."

"The tradition is that it got its name from the fact that when America was young, and it was necessary to bring horses over here from Europe —for there were no horses in America when Columbus discovered it—ships becalmed in those latitudes often had to throw their cargo of horses overboard for want of fresh water to give them. It is certain that many thousands of horses must have perished in that way."

"That's an aside, prompted solely by Tibe's morbid curiosity," said Billy. "Now come back to your text, Max, and go on about the winds."

"Well," continued Max with a smile, "there is also the region of calms along the equator, where, as the name signifies, there is generally no wind at all and only very light ones when there are any—except that there are tropical squalls of course. Between these two regions of calm, lie the trade winds, beginning about latitude 30, north and south, and blowing with remarkable steadiness, diagonally toward the equator. Sometimes

they are interrupted by local causes, but ordinary gales are very rare in the region of the trade winds. These winds have been of inestimable advantage to commerce, especially before steam navigation rendered ships independent of the winds."

"Is that why they are called trade winds?" asked George.

"Possibly," answered Max, "but I think not. I asked my father that question once—he is fond of studying words, especially those that belong to the sea—and he told me that originally the word 'trade' meant a path, or track, or passage way. He thought these winds got their name from that. They mark out a favorable track or path for ships. Still I don't know whether he was right or not."

"But what causes the trade winds?" asked Billy.

"The heat in the region of calms along the equator. It raises the temperature of the air and causes it to expand. Of course the hot air rises, and the air from north and south of that belt blows in to take its place. As this process is going on all the time, of course the trade winds blow more or less all the time."

"But why don't they blow straight south on this side and straight north on the other?" queried George.

"Because of the rotation of the earth. It turns to the east faster than the air on its surface can follow it. So the wind lags behind and instead of blowing due south, blows to the southwest."

"You say," said Tibe, "that storms and gales are rare in the region of the trade winds. Then now that we are in that peculiarly favored part of the ocean, we have no more shaking up to fear."

"Oh, not so fast," quickly answered Max. "There may be gales even here, and we may get something very much worse."

"What's that?"

"Tropical white squalls, and hurricanes that often fairly shave the earth of its trees and shrubs and even of its surface itself sometimes—winds that nothing can withstand—winds that work such havoc and ruin as the severest ordinary gale could not even approach."

"Well, I must say," said Tibe, "you open a pleasant prospect for us to contemplate, this calm and beautiful night."

"I only mentioned that as a possibility. Of course the very worst of the tropical hurricanes do not occur except at long intervals—intervals of years often. But even a baby blow of that sort would be an exceedingly uncomfortable thing for the *Sairey Ann* to encounter. Fortunately it is now October, and September is the month in

which hurricanes are most apt to occur. It is rather late for them now, but still October often gets its share of them."

"Then barring that chance," asked George, "we are likely to have good weather and a favorable wind till we reach Nassau?"

"Yes—barring hurricanes and squalls. You see our course now lies a very little east of south, so that the northeast trade wind comes over our port quarter, and we couldn't have it from a more favorable direction. If conditions continue as they are we ought to reach port within three or four days."

"Well," drawled Billy, "I'm going to port now, and going to sleep there by the port rail."

"William O. Boker," said Tibe solemnly, "are you so lost to all considerations of propriety that you deliberately indulge in a pun at this time of night, on a sea so beautiful and under a moon so brilliant?"

"I beg pardon," apologized Billy, "but I'm just stupid enough with sleep to give way to depraved intellectual tendencies. Good-night, all."

CHAPTER XVI

The Barbarism of War

THE sun shone fervently the next day, and in spite of the gentle trade wind, it was excessively hot on the *Sairey Ann's* deck. The boys passed their time mostly in dozing in the shade of the sail, now and then arousing themselves to take a bath, which they did by pouring buckets of sea water over each other on the deck. The water was almost tepid but as it evaporated from their persons in the wind, it cooled and refreshed them. They "took turns" at the tiller, but there was nothing else in the way of work to be done.

Tibe did indeed seize the opportunity of a calm sea and a steady keel, to boil a piece of "salt horse," as sailors and soldiers call corned beef. All the boys were tired, to the point of disgust, of the very bad fried bacon and pork that had been their diet for now many days. As there were a few potatoes on board, Tibe peeled some of them and dropped them into the kettle just before the beef was done. The beef was tough, but the

combination was regarded by all on board as a delightful change from their monotonous diet of the last week.

"It's the best meal we've had," declared Billy, "since we finished picking the bones of that ham. And I'm glad to see there's enough of it left for a second dinner tomorrow."

"That shows," said George, "how truly all things are comparative. This corned gutta percha seems delicious to us now, because we've had only rancid bacon for a long time past. On shore we'd think it too tough to be eaten."

"That remark shows," said Billy, "which army you belong to. Obviously you are not used to Confederate rations. For our part, we'd think this delicious in camp. Wouldn't we, Tibe?"

"Certainly. We're used to eating gutta percha beef—when we can get it. Generally we can't get it."

"I suppose you fellows do have to live pretty hard. You've no canned meats or vegetables have you?"

"None, except sometimes when we invade one of your camps and plunder it. For the rest we eat the little meat and bread we get, and such other things as we can pick up."

"What sort of things?"

"Why, wild onions sometimes, or tender roots,

or hard corn, or anything that comes to hand. A lot of us poisoned ourselves once by eating boiled potato tops."

"Boiled potato tops!" exclaimed George in astonishment.

"Yes. You see when they are very, very young, potato tops can be eaten as greens. But that's a condition they very soon get over, just as a kid gets over his tender toothsomeness as soon as he begins to grow toward goathood. Well, our potato tops had passed the first flush of their youth, and they proved to be poisonous. Nobody died of eating them, but every man of us was frightfully sick that night."

"And the worst of it," added Max, "was that your people inconsiderately selected that night to attack us, and sick as we were—almost doubled up with pain—we had to go to the guns and work the battery all night."

"What a cruel thing war is, anyhow!" said George. "I remember once when a battle was about to begin—indeed the skirmishers had already begun in front, and we were lying down in line of battle, waiting for them to fall back upon us, I remember thinking, 'here are two great armies confronting each other. They have nothing against each other. If any two of the men from opposing sides were to meet they would be

friends. And yet in a few minutes they are going to begin slaughtering each other. There isn't a man among them on either side, except a few ambitious officers perhaps, who wouldn't rather not.' Now take our own present case, for example. A week ago I was shooting at you fellows and you shot at me. We had never seen each other or even heard of each other, so we simply couldn't have anything against each other. Yet the moment we met we began trying to kill each other. And then when I was shot and fell into the water, I hadn't the slightest hesitation in calling to the very men I had been trying to kill for help. And you, in your turn, were so far from feeling malice toward me, that you stopped your boat to pick me up, when the delay involved an imminent risk of your lives, your ship and the purposes of your expedition. And when you got me on board you were as kind to me as if I had really been Tibe's brother, as he playfully suggested that I might be. I tell you, boys, war is utterly irrational as well as barbarously cruel."

The boy's words, spoken with intense feeling, set his companions thinking, and none of them made any reply. Presently George Smith resumed:

"Then again, we hope to be in port within a few days. I shall be free then, for of course you

couldn't hold me as a prisoner of war on British territory even if you wanted to——"

"Which we certainly do not," interrupted Max.

"No, of course you don't. And that's the absurdity of it as well as the horror of it. Here we are—good comrades and warm, personal friends. We wish each other nothing in the world but good. Not one of us would willingly hurt a hair of another. Yet you will go back to South Carolina as soon as you can, and I as soon as my leg gets well, which will not be long after I get into a hospital. Then we must again do our best—or worst—to kill each other. It is a thing horrible to think of. War is barbaric, a survival of savagery, and no blinding of the eyes by its pomp and glitter can cover the truth about it from the sight of any man who really thinks."

"You are right, I suppose," said Max meditatively. "Of course you are right. Indeed you haven't touched upon the worst of the matter. The brutal butchery of soldiers in the field, who as you say, bear each other no malice, is the very least of it. Think of the desolated hearthstones and darkened lives at home! Think of the wives made widows, of the mother to whom news comes of the killing of the sons who were babes in her arms, prattling children about her knees, and

later promised to be her strong, loving support as age should draw near! Think of the loving father who has toiled and pinched and planned to provide a future for the boy of whom he is so proud; think of him when he learns that the brain he has so lovingly labored to fit for a life of usefulness and honor, has been pierced by a bullet or scattered by a cannon ball! Yes, it is horrible. But how are we to be rid of it?"

"Just as we have rid ourselves of other barbaric practices,—by abandoning it," answered George.

"But how then," asked Max, "are nations to protect their people from wrong, and maintain their independence and their rights? If any nation should say to the rest, 'We have made up our minds to engage no more in war; we have discharged our armies, leveled our forts and sent our cannon to the foundry to be made into steam engines,' what would prevent every other nation from overrunning her territory and oppressing her people at will?"

"Civilization," answered George.

"But how?"

"I'll tell you in a minute. First let me add another to the list of objections to war. I mean its enormous cost to the people both while it is actually going on and in keeping prepared for it

in time of peace. Every country in Europe spends lavish millions every year on forts, arsenals and arms; squanders other lavish millions in paying and feeding multitudes of soldiers. Worse still, every Continental nation compels all its young men to serve three years or more in the army, thus taking three or more of the best years of their lives away from productive work, and devoting them to an expensive idleness. Think what a loss that means! Multiply the two or three millions of soldiers that are always under arms in Europe, by the earning capacity of a man during three years—by the amount of food or clothing or other useful thing he might produce in three years for the betterment of mankind—and you have a startling total to represent this sheer waste. Is it any wonder that in the military nations the people are ill fed, ill clothed and ill housed? For every dollar that a nation spends in war, or in preparation for war, must be taken out of the wages of those who toil. Is it any wonder that a people taxed to maintain such military establishments, often do not see meat once a week, and sometimes not once a year?"

Then Max added: "I was at Gibraltar once, with my father. There are four or five thousand big guns there, the mere cost of which would support every pauper in England for

ten years. And British workmen and peasants had to furnish every dollar of that cost, and support the paupers besides. They were firing one of those big guns at a target, and I was told that it cost four hundred and eighty dollars for every shot fired. That means that every time the gun is fired some British workman's entire wages for a whole year are burnt up! Is it any wonder that pauperism is steadily increasing in Great Britain? For Gibraltar is only one of England's many great fortified positions. There are scores of others scattered all over the earth."

"Your facts, Max, and those that George has given, are very impressive," said Billy, "and between you two you have made out a very good case against war, as a barbaric, cruel, costly, and altogether inhuman practice. But I am curious to hear your answer to Max's questions, George. You promised to tell us how nations may quit warring without inviting wrong, oppression and the robbery of their people."

"How do civilized men maintain their rights without shooting each other?" asked George. "There was a time, you know, not many centuries ago, when the right of private war was as well recognized as the right of public war is now, and exercised much more constantly. Every baron lived in a fortified castle, and every knight

went constantly armed to the teeth and encased in iron. The poorer people had to become slaves, in fact or in effect, in order to live at all. The barons were constantly making war on each other, and plundering each other, and the knights, whenever they felt themselves aggrieved, or cherished an enmity against others, proceeded to kill those others if they could, and nobody thought any the worse of them because of it. Nowadays we'd hang any man who should behave as they did. That was war in its personal form. If anybody had suggested to those men to strip off their armor, put away their swords, fill up the moats of their castles and open their gates, they would have asked in astonishment: 'But how then are we to protect our rights? How are we to prevent our neighbors from plundering our houses and desolating our fields?' Little by little men learned the answer to those questions. Little by little, as they grew more civilized, they learned to establish laws, and to refer all questions of right or wrong to courts that could consider them impartially and settle them far more justly than swords and spears ever did. We do not now feel the necessity of making walking arsenals of ourselves, and fortresses of our homes. If any man wrongs you or robs you, you call upon the courts for redress, and you get it. Why should not civilized

nations do precisely what civilized men have done?"

"But," interrupted Billy, "the courts can enforce their decrees. They can compel the wrong doer to make amends. They can punish crime. They can enforce justice between man and man."

"Where do they get that power?" asked George. "The gray-haired judge upon the bench is not strong enough to restrain a ruffian by force, or to compel disputants to submit to his decisions. Do not the courts derive their authority from the people? And is not their power simply that of the whole community, banded together in an agreement to enforce the laws they have themselves made? Is there not, behind the judge, the physical force of the entire community?"

"Yes, certainly, to all your questions," said Billy. "But how are you going to compel sovereign nations to obey any decree except that of their own will?"

"In precisely the same way as that in which civilized communities compel individuals to obey the law and submit to the decrees of the courts—namely by all of them agreeing to enforce the obedience of each. My idea—it isn't exactly mine, as I first got the suggestion from a wise essay I read a few years ago—is this: Let all the civilized nations agree to unite in setting up

an international court, in which each of them shall be equally represented. Give to that court the right to hear all disputes among nations, and to decide them finally. Let the nations agree to abide by such decisions, and to unite in enforcing them upon any nation that refuses to obey. No one nation could resist all the rest, or would dare try such a thing. Under such a system they would all presently quit fighting and send their soldiers to cultivate their fields or work in their shops, just as under our system of laws and courts men have ceased to feel any necessity to wear swords in the drawing room or anywhere else. The money that must be wrung as taxes out of the scant earnings of the poor, would go to buy better food and clothing and build better homes for those who earn it. The world would be richer by every dollar that war and readiness for war cost, and by the entire earning capacity of all the men now living in wasteful idleness as soldiers. No nation would need to keep any but a miniature army for police purposes."

"But would it be possible to persuade nations to enter into such an agreement?" asked Billy.

"Not now, perhaps. They are not yet civilized enough. But when civilization has reached a higher stage, I think something of that sort will be done. The knights and barons of a few cen-

turies ago, could never have been persuaded to accept our present system. But as civilization has advanced that system has come about and we should look with absolute horror upon the barbarism of the older system if it could be restored anywhere."

"For that matter," said Max, "the civilized nations have already agreed upon many things that would once have been thought impossible. These very seas that we are sailing in were infested with pirates until comparatively recent times, and it was impossible to suppress piracy until the sovereign nations came to an understanding about it, each surrendering a part of its sovereignty for the common good."

"How was that, Max?" asked George.

"Why, you know every nation holds itself bound to protect its subjects or citizens against wrongs done by any other nation. It doesn't matter how far away it may be or how unworthy the man concerned, each sovereign nation must extend its protection to all men who owe it allegiance. Now for a long time this protection was extended even to pirates when they were caught. If Spain, for instance, caught a British subject in the act of piracy, on the high seas, and he claimed British protection, he was apt to get it. Spain could not try him and hang him without

serious risk of getting into trouble with England. So piracy flourished, and even merchant ships had to go armed almost like men of war, just as individual men once did. At last it was agreed among the nations that every pirate should be deemed an outlaw, a man without a country, anybody's game, and that no nation would protect pirates against any other. After that whatever nation caught a pirate hanged him, and piracy quickly came to an end. If nations were brought to such an agreement as that for the common good, I do not see why they shouldn't some day —when they grow civilized enough—substitute an international court for war, as a means of settling disputes and securing justice."

"Possibly," said Billy. "But at present it all seems a beautiful dream, too good to be realized in fact."

CHAPTER XVII

A Point of Honor

THE next morning George Smith asked Billy to examine his wound, which, he said, had troubled him all night. To the distress of all the boys Billy found the wound a good deal inflamed and the leg considerably swollen.

"Fortunately," said Max, "we ought to make port now within two or three days at furthest, and the sooner the better. For the sooner we get you into a hospital and that leg of yours into a surgeon's care, the better it will be for you. In the meantime I'm going to set a bucket of sea water here by you, George, and you must pour water over the leg freely. It may help allay the inflammation."

"Thank you," said the boy, who was evidently suffering a good deal of pain.

"And now you other fellows," said Max, "I'm going to work you a good deal harder than I've been doing. We are in among the Bahama Islands now, and as most of them are uninhabited, and many of them very small, rocky islets, of

course there are no shore lights. We must be careful not to run into any of them unawares. So from now till we make port, I'm going to keep one of you always on lookout duty at the bow during the nights. In daytime the man at the helm can be his own lookout, but at night there must always be a man forward with eyes and mind alert."

"How big a group of islands is it anyhow?" asked Tibe.

"It is six or seven hundred miles long, from north to south, and nearly that wide. There are about six hundred of the islands in all, counting big and little, but only about a dozen or fifteen of them are inhabited. The rest are more or less barren—some of them entirely so while others bear a few wild fruits on a very thin, unproductive soil. Now one thing you must bear well in mind. These islands do not loom up out of the water so as to be easily seen. They are very low and flat, so that in order to see them at night one must be very watchful indeed. I said just now that you must keep your eyes and minds alert—I should have said ears also, for you must listen for the surf beating on any island we may happen on."

"Then you don't know your way through the archipelago?" asked Tibe.

"Yes, I do. Or rather my charts show me the way, and from this time on, I shall study them carefully. But my reckoning may be out a trifle and a very small error in the reckoning might throw us sufficiently out of our course to endanger us."

Max took several observations during the morning and one exactly at noon. Each time he very carefully worked out the position of the ship, trying to get it as accurately as possible. After the noon observation, he called out to Billy to "use the lead,"—that is to say to measure the depth of the water with a sounding line. Billy did so, repeatedly as the ship sped on, each time announcing the result to Max who jotted the figures down on a sheet of paper. After a while he bade Billy cease sounding, and after carefully comparing the figures on his sheet of paper with those on the chart, he quietly said:

"My reckoning is correct or very nearly so."

"Now how on earth—or how on the sea, rather,—do you find that out by sounding?" asked Billy.

"Come here and I'll show you. Look at the chart. It is a chart of the Bahamas—or at any rate the northern part of the group. You see little figures dotted about all over it, As I showed you on the chart of Charleston harbor, these

figures give the soundings at mean low water. Each shows how deep the water is at low tide on the spot on which the figure is placed. Now if my reckoning is correct the water here ought to be about as deep as the figures on the chart call for at the point where I find the position of the ship to be. Your sounding shows this to be the case, so I know that my reckoning is approximately correct. There are lead lines so constructed that the lead brings up particles of the bottom. Ship masters use these when approaching a known coast in a fog or when the clouds are too thick to permit an observation. They know the character of the bottom at various points as well as the soundings, and so by examining the stuff brought up by the lead, to see whether it is sand or mud or what not, they are able to make out pretty well where they are."

"Pardon me," said George. "That's very interesting, but isn't that an island away over yonder to port?"

Max took the glass and scrutinized the horizon carefully. Then handing the instrument to Tibe, who wanted to look, he said:

"You have sharp eyes, George. That is an island, but I can't make it out at all with the naked eye. I expected to see it shortly."

Then studying the chart, and slightly changing his course, he said:

"If my reckoning is right, we should make out another island off to starboard in an hour. I've changed course a bit so as to bring it within the horizon as we pass it. If we can make it out I shall positively know that my reckoning is correct, and that is extremely important when sailing through an archipelago, where most of the islands are unlighted."

"Max," said George presently, "I've been thinking. There are only three of you fellows, and if there must always be one at the helm and one on lookout at night, you'll get very little sleep. Now, you have just complimented my eyesight. Why shouldn't I take a turn at the lookout, with the others?"

"There are just two reasons," answered Max, "why I think I ought not to permit that."

"What are they?"

"First that you are not well enough."

"Oh, as to that," quickly answered the boy, "it is just as easy and comfortable to sit in the bow as to sit here astern, and there's no work to do. You see I don't look with my legs. Besides my leg is much better since you set me to pouring sea water over it."

"Well, my second reason is not so easily put aside," said Max.

"What is it?"

"Why, you are a Union soldier, who must not 'give aid and comfort to the enemy,' as the military phrase runs, and we are 'the enemy.'"

"Well," answered George, "the enemy has given a good deal of 'aid and comfort' to me."

"That's different. You are wounded and a prisoner in our hands, and it is not only our privilege but our duty to do all we can for you, personally. But you see we are at this moment engaged in the military service of the Confederacy. The purpose of our expedition is distinctly hostile to your side. We are trying to do something which the Confederate authorities very greatly want done, and which your people would blow the *Sairey Ann* to pieces to prevent us from doing, if they could; we are trying to accomplish something which, if we accomplish it, will be detrimental to your side and advantageous to ours—I don't at all know how, but that is clearly the fact. Now you, as a Union soldier, cannot honorably aid us in any way to succeed in this enterprise. As a prisoner you had a right to pledge yourself by parole not to interfere with us in any way, and you are bound in honor to

keep that pledge. But you cannot go further and render us any assistance."

"But you see," answered the boy, "I am as anxious to make port as you are. My very life may depend upon my getting to hospital before this wound gangrenes. The difference of a day, or even half a day in the time of the ship's arrival may make a life and death difference to me. It seems to me that under such circumstances I am free to help you shorten the voyage in my own interest."

"Possibly that may be true, George," answered Max, after half a minute's thoughtful silence, "but I doubt it. It is a nice point, but it involves a question of soldierly honor, and in every such case a true man must give honor the benefit of the doubt. So I shall not let you do any duty while you're aboard ship."

"Very well," said George. "Perhaps you are right and after all if things go well with us there will be only two or three nights of watching."

"Only two or three nights," answered Max, "if all goes well. For in that case we'll easily make port within three days. For I've got the ship's position correctly. Look! There's the island I was expecting to see."

CHAPTER XVIII

A White Squall

THE rest of that day, and the night following it, passed without incident of any sort, except that during the night George's leg grew still more painful, and when Billy examined it in the morning he found it alarmingly inflamed, while the boy showed unmistakable signs of fever.

The morning broke upon squally weather. The squalls came out of the southwest, and lasted usually from five to twenty minutes. They blew with so much severity when they came, that Max ordered a double reef in the sail, and himself remained at the tiller all the time, closely scrutinizing the barometer from time to time, and changing his course when necessary, in order to meet and ride out the successive little storms. Sometimes three or four squalls would follow each other in rapid succession. Sometimes an hour or even two hours would pass with no squall at all. The sea did not grow very high under the treatment it was receiving, for the wind was not constant enough for that. But the work of navigat-

ing the ship was difficult, and Max, with grim determination in his face, remained steadfastly at his post. During one of the lulls he allowed Tibe to give him something to eat from his hand, but not for one moment did he relinquish the helm.

So passed the hours until about four o'clock. At that time there was a small island about five miles to leeward, and Max was trying to give it a wide berth, lest a squall should send the ship ashore upon it. Suddenly George suspended his work of pouring sea water on his wound, and called out: "Look there, Max!"

Max was already looking, and what he saw might well have appalled him. Off to the southwest a great white wall of water was coming at lightning speed toward the ship, with an inky-black cloud looming up behind it.

"Lower away the mainsail, quick!" he commanded.

But before the boys could even let go the peak halyard the white squall was upon them. Wind and wave struck almost at the same instant and they struck as a thunderbolt does—with irresistible force and a roar so great that no human voice could make itself heard above the tumult. Instantly the ship went over on her beam ends, and the boys were in the water, clinging as best they could to the mast and sail and rigging,

while every few seconds the sea, now lashed into fury, broke over the ship and came down upon their heads with a force that threatened instant destruction. Fortunately the ship, lying on her side, was between them and the hurricane, thus furnishing them some small shelter. But it was with the utmost difficulty that they maintained their hold upon the wreckage, while it required great care for them to catch their breath between the seas that broke over the ship.

Meantime the cloud had spread itself like a black pall over the entire heavens, so that although it was a little past the middle of the afternoon, the darkness equaled that of the murkiest midnight, while a thick scud enveloped and completely shut out the sea. The wind shrieked, as it struck the ship, like a legion of foul fiends, and the plight of the poor fellows, clinging for life to the wreckage there in the seething sea, was pitiable.

After a little the first fury of the hurricane passed away, but the gale that followed was furious and it was not until the sun was sinking that the black pall of cloud loosened its western edge from the horizon and let the light break again upon the sea. As soon as the howling tempest abated its fury sufficiently to permit his voice to be heard, Max shouted to the boys:

" Make yourselves fast to the mast or boom or anything else. Use the halyards or any cordage you can get."

He did not stop to explain, or indeed even to think out very clearly what he hoped to accomplish by this means, if indeed he hoped for anything. His sole thought was to provide as well as he might against the immediate danger of being washed away from the wreck.

Hour after hour passed, and slowly the tempest subsided. The cloud had passed and about ten o'clock at night the moon placidly sailed up the eastern slope of the sky, looking as peaceful as if there had been no raging sea below, with four well-nigh exhausted human beings clinging for a feeble chance of life, to the spars of a wrecked ship.

As the night advanced the wind went down, and when morning dawned the sea too was moderate. As soon as it was light enough to see, Max began a survey of the situation. The island which had been five miles or more alee when the hurricane struck the ship, was now considerably less than a mile distant. The ship lay on her beam ends. The mast and sail, spread upon the water, and the weight of her centre-board on the other side, had prevented her from turning completely bottom upwards, and so as Max faced the

now perpendicular wall of deck, he saw the bale marked Circle X hanging almost over his head, for its lashings had held fast through all the period of stress. After examining the situation, Max called to Billy:

"Cut that starboard shroud stay close to the point of the mast."

The starboard shroud stay was a stout rope reaching from the top of the mast to the bulwark on the starboard side of the ship,—the side that was now uppermost, the ship lying on her port side. When Billy cut the rope near the top of the mast which was now in the water, the line hung down across the deck, from the upper bulwark to the water. Max took out his jack-knife, opened it and took it between his teeth. Then he seized the dangling rope and by great exertion, with his feet pressing against the vertical deck, he succeeded in reaching the precious bale. With a few sharp cuts he freed it from its lashings, and it fell into the sea.

"Make it fast to the rigging, boys, so that it can't float away," he commanded. Then he slid down the rope into the water. Swimming to the mast, he threw himself upon it and rested for a brief while from the severe exertion of his climb up the deck. When he had got his breath again, Billy asked him:

"What are you going to do, Max? Are you going to blow up the bale?"

"No—not so long as there is the remotest chance of delivering it at its destination. We're going to take it ashore."

"But how?"

"By swimming."

"When?"

"Just as soon as the sea grows a little calmer. We are a good deal exhausted, but we are strong swimmers, and the bale will support us whenever we want to rest. It is not much more than half a mile to the island."

"Here, Max," said George, managing to draw a match box out of his pocket, as he lay half over the floating mast. "Take that. You'll want fire and that box is water proof, and even damp proof. It has several hundred of the best wax matches in it."

"But why not carry it yourself?"

"Because I must bid you boys good-bye here. I am too weak with fever to swim so great a distance."

"But you needn't swim a stroke," said Max. "You'll have nothing to do but hold on to a loop. *We'll* do the swimming."

"Of course we will," answered the other two in a breath. Then Tibe added:

"Do you imagine we're going to let our prisoner escape in any such fashion as that?"

"Fellows," said the boy, "there certainly never were kinder friends than you've been to me. I thank you."

He could say no more at the moment. And no more was necessary.

Max and the boys immediately began making their preparations. Cutting off pieces of rope from the rigging, each about twenty or thirty inches in length, they managed, though with much difficulty, to pass one end of each under one of the ties or ropes, that bound the bale together. Then tying the two ends together they had a securely fastened loop by which to hold on to the bale. They made a dozen of these loops, placing them on different sides of the bale, so that no matter which side of it should be uppermost the swimmers would have rope loops ready to their hands.

It was noon or later, before all was ready. Just then it occurred to Max that none of them had had food for twenty-four hours, their last meal having been eaten at noon on the day before. Bidding the others rest themselves, he swam to the stern of the ship and endeavored to climb somehow to the companionway hatch, where their food supplies were bestowed in a locker.

"It is of no use, boys," he said, when after

awhile he gave up the attempt and swam back to the sail. "I hoped I might be able to reach the locker and get something for us to eat before undertaking our swim. But it's of no use. So cut the bale loose and we'll be off. But wait a minute."

With that he cut off a long piece from one of the halyards, passed it once around the wounded boy, under his arms, and then made the two ends of it fast to one of the loops on the cotton bale.

"There!" he said, when all was done; "now even if you grow too weak to hold on, you can't sink, and neither can you drift away."

Even in this distressful situation, Tibe's spirits and playfulness did not desert him. Perhaps that was fortunate, for the boys needed something of the kind to keep them cheerful.

"What a rebellious prisoner you are, George," he said. "This is the second time Max has had to tie you to keep you from escaping from our clutches. And half an hour ago you wanted us to go ashore and leave you here. Who knows but that you'd have swum to the South Carolina coast?"

George smiled feebly, for he was now in a considerable fever and excessively weak.

CHAPTER XIX

Ashore

"FORTUNATELY the tide is with us," said Max, when the swimmers with the bale marked Circle X, were well clear of the wreck.

"How do you know, Max?" asked Billy.

"By the surf that I see beating on the shore, for one thing," he answered. "You see the sea is now quite as calm as if there had been no storm yesterday, and yet I can see a white line of surf on the shore. Besides I know about when the tide ought to begin the flood to-day. The nautical almanac tells all that, and I've studied it pretty carefully ever since we left Charleston."

"You're a wonder, Max," said Billy. "And you promised to explain something about tides to us a while ago—"

"Mr. Chairman," broke in Tibe, "I rise, or sink, to a point of order. I submit that at this present moment we are much too damp to—"

"Oh, be still, Tibe," interrupted Billy. "You know I didn't mean now."

"Stop talking, both of you!" commanded Max. "Save your breath for swimming. You'll need all of it."

And indeed they did need it. It was very hard and very slow work to push the half sunken bale of cotton through the water, and the boys were weak and exhausted for lack of food and by reason of their long stay in the water and their exertions to hold fast to the wreck throughout a long night. Had the water been cold they must long ago have succumbed. But the water in the Bahamas is tepid, so that immersion in it produces no shock.

Max had so arranged George's lashings, that the wounded boy lay across the bale with only his legs in the water, thus sparing him the exertion even of hanging on. The other boys rested frequently from active swimming, by holding on to the loops, and letting themselves float. They did this one at a time however, the others continuing to swim, so that their slow progress toward the shore might not at any time stop. For they all realized that they must make the shore before the turn of the tide. They could never have breasted a receding tide, and should they fail to reach shore before the ebb began, they must remain in the water for six hours at least, awaiting another flood. They knew well that they could not do

that even should the weather remain quiet and the sea calm, which might easily not be the case.

Max closely scrutinized the coast of the island as they drew near to it. Presently he said—and it was the first word that had been spoken for hours—

"There's a little bay just off to the right. We must change our course and make the mouth of that. It would be difficult to get through the surf along this exposed shore."

The boys saw the wisdom of the suggestion, although it would prolong their swim somewhat. So swimming with all the strength they had left they pushed the bale toward the mouth of the bay and finally entered it.

It was only a diminutive indentation, but it was at any rate a land-locked harbor. That is to say one of the points of land that formed its mouth, curved southwardly so as to form a barrier between the sea outside and the quiet waters of the little bay.

Once inside this hook, the boys found the water almost as still as that of a pond. They easily pushed the bale marked Circle X to the shore and grounded it.

"Now," said Max, untying George's lashings, and gently carrying him to a bit of smooth ground, "you lie there, George, and take a good

rest. Here, Billy, take this rope," handing him the line by which George had been lashed to the bale, " and make the bale fast to that little sapling, so that the outgoing tide shall not carry it away. Then we'll all walk along shore and hunt for shell fish or something else to eat."

So exhausted were the boys that they felt this to be almost a cruel order. They had long ago passed that point of starvation where one ceases to crave food, and if left to themselves, they would have lain down at once to sleep, perhaps not to wake again in this world. They did not fully realize their condition. They felt only that they wanted to be still. So they obeyed Max's order reluctantly and with intelligences so dulled by exhaustion that they could hardly use even their eyes in the search for food.

" Eat a few of the first shell fish you find," enjoined Max, " to restore your strength. But eat only a very few. Your appetites will come back after the first mouthful, and you'll want to eat voraciously. That would be very dangerous in our starved condition."

A few mussels were all that Tibe and Billy found, and opening them with their jack-knives, they swallowed perhaps half a dozen apiece. Instantly their craving for food came back with such intensity that had there been a supply at hand,

both would have overeaten dangerously. Fortunately they had found very little when they heard Max, who had gone up the shore while they had gone down it, calling to them. They went toward him and just before reaching the point where George lay, Billy found a few more mussels. He thought of George and saved them for him. As he passed the boy, who was too feverish to sleep, he opened the bivalves and fed them to him. Then both the boys went on to answer Max's call. When they reached him they found him breaking off great blocks of oysters from a coral bank, with a club. In that region of abundant sea life, the oysters are often found in this way, in great banks, their shells attached to each other in a mass, and the whole mass attached to a bank or to anything else that the oysters can find to cling to.

Finding that his comrades had already eaten some mussels, Max forbade them to eat any of the oysters as yet.

"You must digest the mussels first," he told them. "Your stomachs are very weak from starvation. You must give them a chance. So off with your flannel shirts. Tie the sleeves around the neck so as to make bags of the shirts, and fill them full of oysters."

By this time the food the boys had swallowed,

began to have its effect in strengthening them and in arousing them from the half stupor which had come upon them as soon as they were safely ashore. They obeyed Max's order with some show of interest, and together the three, making repeated trips to and from the oyster bank, soon piled up two or three bushels of the oysters in their shells, at the place of landing.

After a little while Max permitted some further eating, cautioning his companions to eat very slowly, allowing a little time to elapse after swallowing one oyster, before beginning to open the next. Thus slowly they consumed about a dozen large oysters each, and their energies rapidly revived.

They had had no water now for nearly thirty hours, and at first the water in the oysters somewhat slaked their parching thirst. But it was salt water, and of course in the end it only aggravated thirst. So all three set out to search for fresh water.

"We'll find some not far away," said Billy, whose spirits were coming back. "For, from appearances, that squall of yesterday drenched this island with a heavy rain storm, and of course there will be pools somewhere around."

Billy was right and several little rainwater reservoirs were soon found. The boys lay flat upon

the ground and eagerly drank from these supplies. Then arose the question of how to take some of the water to George, for they had no vessel of any kind in which to carry it. Not only had they no cups or pails, but they had not even a hat or cap among them, their head gear having been lost in the storm of the day before.

"It's a case of Mahomet and the mountain," said Tibe. "If we can't take the water to George, we can bring George to the water, and I'm going to do it."

So the young giant went to the wounded boy, now too weak to walk, lifted him tenderly and carried him to the nearest of the pools. With the thirst of fever upon him, as well as the thirst of long abstinence from water, the boy drank eagerly, almost frantically, until, for the sake of prudence, Tibe restrained him. When, after repeated drinking, his thirst was at last allayed, the boy turned upon his back and said: "Thank you, Tibe! I think if you fellows don't mind, I'll stay here and sleep awhile."

"No, you must not," said Max. "There's a good deal of vegetable growth here, and there may be malaria—indeed there pretty certainly is. The only safe place to stay—especially for you with your tendency to fever,—is down there by the salt water."

"And I promise," said Tibe, "to carry you to the pool every time you want a drink, if it's a dozen times a night, as it very probably will be."

"I never knew better friends in my life than you enemies are," said George gratefully, as Tibe again lifted and carried him.

"Oh, well," answered Tibe, "there never was a fellow who deserved friendship more than you do."

"That is certainly so!" broke in Billy. "Now you fellows go back to the shore and pick out the softest places you can for us to sleep on. I'm going to gather up some dry wood. We're as wet as drowned rats, and we need a fire."

"Right, Billy," said Max. "I'll help you in getting the wood."

There were no very large trees in that part of the island, but there was an abundance of stunted growth, so that if the boys had had an ax, there would have been no difficulty in quickly providing themselves with fuel. As it was, having only their jack-knives, they must depend upon fallen limbs, and such brushwood as they could find. The two made several trips to what they now began to call the camp, each time carrying large armfuls of such wood as they found. Tibe was not there, and Max and Billy at last began to wonder what he had done with himself. There was

no occasion for uneasiness, however, and so they proceeded to build a fire, just as the sun went down. Night followed almost instantly, without any intervening twilight, as it always does in those low latitudes, and still Tibe did not return.

"I wonder," said Billy after a while, "if it is possible that exhaustion and the prolonged strain of anxiety, have driven Tibe out of his head?"

"That is extremely unlikely," answered Max. "Tibe isn't the sort of fellow whose brain gives way easily. Still if he doesn't return by the time the moon rises, we'll search for him. It's too dark to find our way about now. In the meantime we'll roast and eat a few dozen of these oysters."

But just as they were laying the first of their oysters on the coals, Tibe came striding along the shore, and upon reaching the fire he sat down heavily, like the very weary young man that he was.

The other two asked him a dozen questions in a breath as to where he had been, what he had been doing and the like.

Instead of answering, Tibe reached out to the fire, took up an oyster which was just opening its shell under the influence of the heat, and devoured it. He did this half a dozen times before he

spoke, in the meantime replenishing the supply of oysters on the coals. At last, having somewhat satisfied his appetite, he explained.

"I went along down the shore," he said, "to see if I couldn't find some more substantial wood than this brush, and I found it. There has been a wreck down there—I don't mean the *Sairey Ann's,*—and the shore is strewn with wreckage. I should judge that the wreck occurred a good while ago, and that it was a schooner loaded with lumber that came ashore. Anyhow I've got a lot of the stuff together, and we'll make a raft of it and tow it up here into the bay in a day or two—sometime when the sea is behaving itself like a good little sea. Now I'm going to sleep. By the way, George, do you want some water?"

"Oh, no," answered the boy. "I can get on without it."

"That means that you do want some water, but don't want to trouble me. So here goes."

With that he picked up the wounded boy, and utterly worn out as he was, he staggered through the undergrowth to the water pool. Returning he carefully disposed of the boy, and then threw himself down flat on his back. In an instant he was asleep.

CHAPTER XX

Exploration and a Discovery

THE sun, the wind and the heat of the fire had pretty well dried out the clothing of the party before they went to sleep, and so they slept soundly throughout the night. But with the sun's rising they all awoke, and began throwing oysters into the fire. They were stiff in all their joints and sore in all their muscles. More distressing still, was the dull lassitude into which their minds had fallen. For the long strain of anxiety had wearied their minds even more than their severe physical exercise had tired their bodies.

Billy was the first to throw off this dulness in some degree. While the breakfast of oysters was in progress, he "shook himself together" as he phrased it, and set himself to the task of arousing his comrades.

"An oyster breakfast is an excellent thing in its way," he said, philosophically, "but when it comes to three meals a day on oysters with nothing else, it promises to become monotonous after

a while. Rouse yourselves, you fellows, and let's do a little thinking. Does it occur to you that our present situation is a very perilous one?"

The suggestion had the effect Billy intended it to have. The thought of the difficulties that confronted them roused the boys' attention, and set them thinking, "just as shaking a watch when it is wound up too tight makes it go," Billy said.

"You are right, Billy," said Max. "We must be up and doing. We are castaways on an island which I take to be uninhabited. Indeed it is almost certainly so. Certainly it isn't often visited by ships if it ever is, which I doubt. It is too small for that. We must stay here for a long time, at any rate."

"We're regular Robinson Crusoes," said Tibe, whose inexhaustible cheerfulness had returned. "I always liked to read that ancient mariner's story of his adventures, but I confess I never longed to repeat them on my own account."

"No," said Max. "But that necessity seems to be thrust upon us, and we must make the best of it. The first thing to do is to face the situation and see what it is and where we stand. My father used to tell me, when he was teaching me mathematics, that to understand the exact terms of a problem clearly, was the first and most necessary condition of solving it. 'Without that,' he

would say, 'you're sure to make false steps and to lead your mind astray.' Now we can't afford to make any false steps, so our first business is to find out clearly what the conditions of our problem are. To that end we must first of all explore the island thoroughly today to find out whether or not it is inhabited, and still more to discover what its resources are in the way of food. For of course we can't go on indefinitely living on oysters and nothing else."

"And water, too," added Billy. "We must find a more trustworthy water supply than we have at present, for unless it rains again soon these little pools will all dry up. We must find a stream of some sort if there is one anywhere on the island."

"But there isn't," said Max. "There are no streams in the smaller islands of the Bahama group, but there are a good many fresh water springs here and there."

"But the springs must make streams," said Tibe. "Their water must run away somewhere."

"It does," said Max. "It runs away into the ground. You see these islands are mere coral reefs, on which a thin, porous soil has formed in the course of ages. But we mustn't go into that now. We'll look for springs while exploring for food. Now, in order to make the search as thor-

ough as possible, we'll divide, each of us going in a direction different from that of the others."

"As for George," said Tibe, "we'll leave him to keep camp and see to it that none of our valuable belongings are stolen in our absence. Do you want some water, George, before we start?"

"No, thank you, Tibe. My fever seems to have left me, and my leg is far less painful than it was. If I want water while you're gone, I can hop to the spring on my good leg."

The island was indeed very small—covering only a few thousand acres,—about the size of an ordinary plantation in our southern states. The boys found it completely without inhabitants, but Max discovered the remains of an old house, and some other evidences that it had once been cultivated. Probably it had been deserted because of the thinness of the soil, as a plantation unprofitable to till. Fortunately some of the things once cultivated there were still growing wild in favored localities, and on their return to camp Tibe and Billy brought their shirts full of such fruits as they could find. Among these were some oranges, not yet quite as ripe as they should be, some pomegranates, and several kinds of fruit of which they did not know the names, but which they depended upon Max's knowledge of hot-climate fruit to recognize as edible or otherwise.

Billy also brought some small nubbins of Indian corn that had grown wild. When Max arrived, a little later, he brought with him a richer spoil. He drew forth from his shirt first some sweet potatoes and after that some curiously gnarled, branching roots, a foot or so in general length and four or five inches thick.

"What on earth did you bring those tree roots for?" asked Billy.

"Because they are the most valuable vegetable food that we could have," the leader answered.

"Are those things good to eat? I should as soon have thought of an old stump as a food supply. What are they anyhow?"

"Yams," said Max, "and the best of it is that there's more where these came from."

"Yams? Why, I thought a yam was simply a yellow sweet potato."

"Yellow sweet potatoes are often called yams," answered Max, "but improperly. These are real, West India yams, and when we roast them you'll find them about the best substitute for bread that you ever saw. It is lucky there are more of them in what I suppose was once a garden up there on the northern end of the island. I find too that the place is alive with wild animals and birds. We must devise some way of catching some as a meat supply if we can."

"Of course this bay is full of fish," said Billy, "if we could only catch them. But we can't. We've no tackle."

"I've got half a dozen good hooks," said Tibe, drawing a parcel from his pocket. "I was fishing when our orders came, and I forgot to leave these at Bluffton. But of course they are useless without lines."

"Possibly we might make some sort of lines out of the pieces of rope we have," said Max.

"Or, much better still, out of some of the cotton in the bale marked Circle X," suggested Billy. "We'll try that anyhow when we get settled. I thought when I left Bluffton that I never wanted to taste a fish again while I lived, but now I'm hungry for one."

In the meantime Max had placed a big yam in the hot ashes to roast, for it was now about the middle of the afternoon and the company was hungry.

"The tide is coming in," said one presently. "Don't you think, Max, we'd better roll the bale marked Circle X a little farther up on the beach? It needs drying out."

Max accepted the suggestion and the bale was soon well up on the shore. From where it lay, and indeed from all points on that side of the little bay where the boys had made their camp, it was

impossible to see the ocean outside, because of the hook of the shore that landlocked the bay. But they were too tired with their day's exploration, to go to the outer beach at present, to bring away any of the lumber and wreckage which Tibe had found the evening before. They threw themselves down on their backs to rest while waiting for the big yam to roast.

After a while Billy raised himself to a sitting posture, intending to look to the fire a little. Instantly he called out:

"Hello! What's that?"

The others were on their feet in a moment, and as they looked they saw the wreck of their ship drifting, side on to the wind, around the hook of land and into the bay.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Tibe, "it's the *Sairey Ann!*"

It was true enough. Wind and tide had caused the wreck to drift ashore, and as the incoming tide ran more strongly through the narrow entrance to the bay than upon the open coast, the *Sarah Ann* came rapidly through the mouth of the little harbor. She was still on her beam ends, her mast and sail lying upon the water and supporting her in that position, while her centre-board stuck out from her keel.

"The old girl has been looking for her runaway

boys," said Tibe, "and she has found us. Wonder what she'll do to us now that we're caught."

In an instant Max was out of his clothes and in the water. Swimming out to the sloop—the distance was small—he swam all around her carefully inspecting. The other boys had promptly followed him. The boat lay on her side, more than a third of her being under water. But she seemed in no way battered, at least on that part of her hull which was out of water. "And that was the weather side when the squall struck us," Max reflected.

After a little he climbed up on the foot of the prostrate mast, where it joined the deck, and called to the others to follow.

"Bend that line on to the anchor," he ordered, "while I make the other end of it fast to the deck post."

It was a difficult task, for the hold of each boy was slender and their footing on the mast very slippery. But after half an hour's hard work punctuated by many falls into the water, it was accomplished. Then Max swam ashore, bidding the others stay where they were. Presently he came swimming back, holding his open jack-knife between his teeth.

"Here, Tibe," he said, "you're the tallest. Take this knife in your teeth, get the highest foothold

you can, and see if you can't cut the lashings of the anchor. But look out for yourself when it drops. Don't let the anchor line strike you."

The anchor was securely lashed with ropes to the starboard gunwale—the one now uppermost—to keep it from sliding about the deck in a heavy sea, and as the boat now lay on her side, of course the anchor would drop into the water the moment the lashings were cut. But Tibe's efforts to reach the lashings proved futile. From the highest footholds he could secure, he could not reach the anchor. At last Billy, who had been studying the problem intently, called out:

"You can't do it, Tibe, but I can."

The boys laughed a little at the idea of little Billy being able to reach where his very tall companion could not, but they did not understand Billy's plan. Billy was a notable climber. Taking the knife from Tibe and placing it between his teeth, he swam to the bow of the sloop. There, after two or three failures, he managed to secure a foothold on the bowsprit and to lay his person along the curved and slippery starboard bow. After resting for a minute, he began climbing up this and soon reached the rail, along which it was easy to crawl. A minute later he had cut the lashings, and the anchor fell into the sea.

By this time it was nearly dark and the boys

swam ashore for their supper of yam and oysters, each finishing the meal with an orange.

"What do you propose to do with the *Sairey Ann?*" asked George, who was now feeling well enough to join the others at supper, though his wound was still terribly inflamed and very painful.

"I don't know yet," answered Max. "But now that we've got her securely anchored in a land-locked harbor, no harm can come to her, and we'll have time to study out the problem of what to do with her. Anyhow she has stores aboard and some food, and perhaps we can get at them in some way, if we can do nothing else. But all that can wait for morning. We must go to sleep now. Oh, by the way," he suddenly added, "I found a spring or two, but they're a long way off, and we've nothing to carry water in."

"I found a good one not a hundred yards away," said Tibe.

"Good! Then we can manage that matter very well. Are you comfortable, George?"

"Yes."

"Well, good-night then, to all of you."

CHAPTER XXI

An All Night Vigil

WEARY as he was, Max did not sleep much that night. He went to sleep indeed, but when, two or three hours later, the moon shone in his face, he suddenly waked, and try as he might he could not woo sleep again. He sat up for a while, thinking, thinking, thinking. He argued with himself that the thinking should be postponed till morning, but it was to no purpose. He tried to divert his mind by repeating poetry, rhymes and nursery jingles, but in vain. His mind would come back again immediately to the problem he was wrestling with and could not solve.

Sometimes he would rise and walk down to the margin of the water, and there contemplate the *Sarah Ann* as she lay on her beam ends at anchor in the bay. Then, with a shiver—for the dew was heavy and, even in so low a latitude, a clear night is apt to be sharply cool,—he would return to the little brush-wood fire and try again to sleep.

After a while, as he sat there brooding, George Smith sat up also, and with much of tenderness in his voice said:

"Max, old fellow, you're troubled in your mind, and like the generous fellow you are, you are trying to fight it out alone. I've been observing you for an hour, and now I'm going to share your troubles with you. So tell me all that is in your mind. You see we're on British territory now, and I'm no longer your prisoner. I'm just your friend."

"Thank you, George, with all my heart. I'll tell you what troubles me, if you'll put your hand on my shoulder, and hop with me down to the water's edge. We mustn't wake the others with our talking."

George did as Max had asked, and the two sat down near the margin of the bay, Max first kindling a little fire from a brand he had brought in his hand.

"There is a fearful load of responsibility on my shoulders, George, and when I think the thing over it almost appals me. Maybe it won't seem quite so bad when daylight comes and the sun shines. But tonight I can't see my way out."

"Max," said George, "do you remember what you said to us yesterday?"

"No, what was it?"

"Why, that the necessary first step in working out a problem is to grasp its terms and conditions firmly?"

"Oh, yes. But I think I fully understand the terms and conditions of this one already. If it were only myself that was concerned, I should go to sleep and trust to my ingenuity and the chapter of accidents, to find some way out. But there are you other fellows—"

"Leave me entirely out of the reckoning. My presence here is merely one of the fortunes of war. You had nothing to do with it, except that you rescued me from the water and saved my life. I confess I had rather be here at this moment than lying in the mud at the bottom of that creek, and that is precisely where I should be at this moment, if you hadn't stopped to save my life at the risk of your own. So you must leave me entirely out, in making up the catalogue of your responsibilities."

"You are always generous, George. But at any rate there are the other fellows. I am certainly responsible for them. I brought them into this difficulty, when I might just as well have brought somebody about whom I care a good deal less. If any harm comes to them,—"

"If any harm comes to us," broke in Billy, as he and Tibe joined the other two, "we have only

ourselves to blame for it. Now look here, Max, you're morbid to-night. You forget things. Don't you remember that Tibe and I eagerly wanted to come with you on this expedition? Don't you remember that you told us in advance that the chances were nine in ten against our ever getting out of it alive? Didn't we volunteer with our eyes wide open? Aren't we men, and soldiers, ready to risk danger and meet death if need be, in the public service? Why do you think of us now as a couple of little girls whom you are escorting and for whose safety you are responsible? Come, Max, shake yourself together."

"Billy is just right, Max," added Tibe. "If you persist in thinking of me as a girl baby in your charge, you must immediately provide me with a bib. Besides I resent being thought of in that way. Look at me, Max"—rising to his full height; "look at me! Take an observation of my longitude! Calculate my altitude as you do that of the North Star, and then tell me if you think I need anybody to take care of me!"

"Thank you boys, all of you," said Max. "Still I am the captain of this expedition, and as such I am responsible for its success or failure. It is my duty to deliver the bale marked Circle X. It is my duty so to manage things as to bring those under my command out of the affair in safety.

And now that we are in a peculiarly embarrassing perplexity, in a situation from which there is no obvious escape, it is I who must find a way out, if there is any way out."

"Now you're forgetting something else," said Billy. "What's the matter with your memory tonight, Max?"

"What am I forgetting, Billy?"

"Why, don't you remember that the reason you assigned for selecting Tibe and me to go with you, was that you wanted fellows who would stand by you in difficulties, and help you find a way out? And didn't we pledge ourselves to do just that? Now if you'll shake yourself together a bit, you'll see that while it is your right and duty to command, and to decide what course is best in every emergency, it is my duty and Tibe's duty to help you, to think out ways and means, to use all our wits, to study the problem as closely as you do, and to offer the very best suggestions we can."

"Well, yes, of course—"

"Well, yes, of course," interrupted Billy. "You are no more responsible than we are, no more bound than we are to find ways of making the expedition successful. And as for any responsibility for our safety—that's driveling nonsense. You wouldn't think of that if you took us into battle. You'd order us to whatever position you

thought best, to make our fighting effective. If we should get shot you'd never think of blaming yourself. That's just the way you must look at the present situation. We're 'in a tight place' as the saying is. But it is not your fault. You've done the best you could for the service, and a certain measure of misfortune has overtaken us. There's no use in bewailing that, and certainly you have no more right to feel that you are responsible for any ill that may befall us, than you would have to feel in the same way if we should be shot in battle while under your command."

Billy spoke earnestly, almost excitedly. He was determined to force Max to throw off the undue load that burdened his mind, and he had succeeded.

"You are right, Billy, of course," Max said. "I'll try to look at things in that way, and perhaps I'll think more clearly if I do. At any rate I'll have the benefit of your thinking and Tibe's. We'll work out a way, somehow. I have been in many difficulties of one kind and another, and I never yet failed to get out."

"No, and we won't fail this time," said Billy.

"Now," said George, who had been silent all this while, "let us come back to our starting point. We have a difficult problem to work out —I say *we,* because I'm going to help all I can.

with my head, as I would help physically if my leg would let me. I'm a free man now, on British soil, and I'm your companion and friend. It is true that your expedition is in a sense hostile to that cause in behalf of which I am a soldier, and so I have no right to aid you in it for the sake of making you successful. But I have an entire right to aid you in it for the sake of saving my own life and the lives of you my friends. That's a parenthesis. Let us come back to the subject. We have a difficult problem to solve. As you truly said yesterday, the first thing to do is to get a firm grasp of its terms and conditions. So suppose you state them, Max, as exactly as you can."

"Well," said the young captain, "we have been cast ashore on an uninhabited island. It is an island that ships never visit, for the reason that there is nothing to bring them hither. So there is no hope of rescue in that way. We must stay here till we find or make a way of our own for our escape. The food supplies on the island are very scant. We must, therefore, make all the haste we can in providing the means of getting away. There is a good deal of food on board our wrecked ship, and we must find a way of getting at that. I'm thinking of beaching her at high tide."

"Is she very badly hurt?" asked George.

"No. So far as I can discover she is not hurt at all seriously. Of course her seams must be strained a good deal, but if there were any way of getting her right side up, we could remedy that. But that's the trouble. She's on her beam ends and—"

"Well, I have an idea," said George. "It may be of no account, and probably is so, for I know very little about boats. Still—"

"What is your idea?" asked Max.

"Suppose we should pick out a place along shore here, where the bottom is smooth and level and tow her in there at high tide. Why couldn't we then fasten ropes to her and carry them to the trees on shore. Couldn't we then perhaps pull her over on her bottom when the tide goes out?"

Max thought a moment before answering. Then he said:

"Possibly we might, especially if we can get at a block and tackle on board. There are plenty of such things in the lazaret, if we can get at them. Your plan is well worth trying anyhow, George. But as the cargo has shifted badly, it will be extremely difficult."

"Precisely what do you mean by cargo shifting?" asked George. "You see I'm very ignorant of sea things."

"Why," answered Max, "when a ship rolls over to one side or the other, her cargo has a strong tendency to slip down to the side that is lowest and hold it down. That's about the worst thing that can happen to a ship when she is out at sea. It is apt to throw her on her beam ends at once, rendering her practically a wreck, just as the *Sarah Ann* now is. To prevent such shifting of cargo, those who load ships take very great pains to secure the freight immovably in its place. When a ship is carrying grain in bulk, a kind of freight that shifts upon very small provocation, they build a stout floor over the surface of the grain, and set up strong posts between that and the deck above. Now the *Sarah Ann's* cargo has undoubtedly shifted, though I did not think that possible when we left Charleston. That is what prevents her from either righting herself or turning completely bottom up. Of course the sail, lying flat on the water helps to prevent the latter performance, but in spite of that she would turn over one way or the other if it were not that her cargo, or the bulk of it, has shifted to port, its weight holding her in her present position. Anyhow your idea, George, has the germ of success in it, though there are many difficulties."

"What are some of them?"

"The centre-board is one. You see it was

down when the squall struck us, and so it now sticks out five or six feet from the keel. Of course we can't roll the boat over on that, and if we could we should destroy the centre-board, without which the boat would be almost useless, and entirely incapable of windward work. Then again there is only a very small tide in this bay—less than two feet difference between high and low water, and so we can't float the sloop far up the beach with any reasonable hope of ever getting her off again. However, we'll study all that by daylight, which is nearly on us now. Let's go back and get some sweet potatoes into the fire. Then you two go down the beach and get a fresh supply of oysters, while I replenish the wood pile. By the time we've done that the potatoes will be done."

"It is astonishing," said Billy to Tibe as they walked down the beach, "how quickly Max's spirits and energies came back the moment he saw a chance to work with some hope."

"Yes," answered the tall boy, "but the feeling that he is not alone in his work or responsibility had quite as much effect as anything else. That's always the way with us human beings."

CHAPTER XXII

One Day's Work

AFTER breakfast Max swam around the wreck three or four times pausing now and then, and holding on to whatever offered, while he studied probabilities and possibilities. In the meanwhile the other boys waded along the shores of the bay to find the gentlest slopes of the beach and to familiarize themselves with such other conditions as might influence them in selecting a place at which to beach the *Sarah Ann* if Max should at last decide to beach her. It must be where stout young trees grew near enough to the water's edge to serve as check posts for their ropes and tackle. It must be where no jutting projections of the coral limestone of which the island was composed, might interfere with their work or damage the boat.

After a prolonged survey of the situation, Max swam ashore and called the boys to him.

"Now then, fellows," he said as he seated himself on the ground for a brief rest after his long swim, "our work is cut out for us for today and

tomorrow. And perhaps for the next day also, as we have a big preliminary task before us."

"What is it, Max?"

"Why, we must go down the shore to Tibe's lumber piles and construct a stout, buoyant raft, and tow it up here. We shall need it to stand upon while we work on the *Sairey Ann*. There is a good deal of hard work to be done on her before we think of beaching her. It will take at least two days to get the raft made and to tow it up here, if indeed it doesn't take three or four days. So let's be off."

"Now let me suggest," said Billy, "that as it is already raining a little, and is going to rain a great deal more, and as we shall have to work in the water a good deal of the time, we leave our clothes here, covering them with bushes to keep them dry. We'll need some dry things to put on when we get back."

Billy's suggestion was at once adopted and George volunteered to provide some sort of shelter for the clothing to be left behind, thus saving the time of the working party.

"We must carry our jack-knives," said Max, "for use in cutting vines. For as we have no nails we must bind our raft together with vines."

So with nothing on them except their boots—necessary for the protection of their feet on the

rocks,—and armed with their jack-knives, the boys set out. But before they had got beyond hearing George Smith called to them and they returned.

"Pardon me, Max," he said, "but I have a suggestion to make. Won't it be very difficult, and perhaps impossible for you three fellows to tow a big raft up here through the surf? You see the shore is exposed all the way along there."

"Of course it will be very difficult and perhaps impossible," answered Max, "but at any rate we must try it. There is nothing else for us to do."

"I do not see that," said George. "Why not tow your timber and lumber up here a little at a time, and build the raft here?"

"How stupid of me not to have thought of that!" exclaimed Max in disgust with himself. "Of course that's the way to do it. Thank you, George. You said you were going to help, and I'm very sure you are doing it."

It was about half a mile to the point where the lumber laden ship had come ashore. That had been many months before, and so a good deal of the timber had sunk partly into the sand, so that the boys had to dig it out, using shells for spades. This was particularly the case with some heavy, squared timbers, of which Max decided that they needed at least three as a foundation frame for the raft. With earnest work the boys found their

spirits rapidly reviving, and as they squatted there upon the sand digging with shells, Tibe was suddenly struck with the grotesqueness of their appearance, declaring that they looked precisely like a company of urchins playing in the sand at some seaside resort.

It was late in the day when the last of these three timbers was lifted out of its sand bed. They were about nine or ten inches square and perhaps twenty-two or twenty-three feet long. It was still raining heavily and the boys were excessively weary. They began to realize now, how greatly they were in need of some more substantial food than oysters and sweet potatoes. It had been several days since they had eaten meat, and their strength was giving way under the combined influence of semi-starvation, constant exposure, and very hard work.

"That's all we can do today, boys," said Max, throwing himself, exhausted, upon the beach. "The rest must wait till tomorrow, and indeed I doubt if we do much at this job tomorrow. We must have some meat to eat, and I think we'll devote tomorrow to an effort to kill or capture some animal or some of the birds on the island. We need strength now, more than anything else. So we'll make some traps and deadfalls tonight by the firelight and tomorrow we'll set them.

Lie down now and rest a little, and then we'll go to camp."

The boys did so, and within a few minutes they were all sound asleep. When they waked it was night, and the rain had ceased for a brief while. They picked their way along the shore, a flash of lightning now and then illuminating the beach. Billy was walking in advance of his companions. Presently a brilliant flash of lightning showed him the shore ahead, and instantly afterwards Billy broke into a run like a startled deer—completely disappearing in the murky darkness.

"What does that mean?" asked Tibe of Max. "Surely Billy Boker isn't frightened at a flash of lightning."

"I don't know so well about that," answered Max uneasily. "You see he's fearfully exhausted, and of course our nervous systems have been terribly strained. I'm afraid Billy has lost his nerve, and if he has it is nothing to wonder at."

Just then another flash showed Billy a rod or so in advance, struggling with some object the nature of which the boys did not make out in the instant's view that the lightning flash had given them. The flash was quickly followed by a great downpour of rain, which manifestly did not dampen Billy's spirits, for in the midst of it he shouted:

"Hurrah! boys, hurrah! hurrah! I've got him on his back. Come quick and help me!"

Max and Tibe hurried forward, stumbling in the darkness as they went. When they reached Billy, they found him standing over a huge turtle, which he had rendered completely helpless by turning him on his back.

"Billy," said Max, "you are—"

"Oh, never mind what I am. Spare me your compliments, and get a good, limber vine out of the woods up there. For tired or not tired, we must drag this big fellow to camp at once. He'll make steaks enough to feed us for a week at least, and we'll use his huge shell as our water tank."

"How did you find him, Billy?"

"Why, when that flash of lightning came, my eyes happened to be directed to this part of the shore, and I caught a glimpse of the gentleman out for a stroll on the beach. I broke into a run on the instant, but in the darkness I overran the spot, and should have lost my game but for that second flash. As it was I got here just in time. In half a minute more the turtle would have been in the water. Now you know the story. Go and get a vine to drag him with."

The lightning was now almost incessant, and Tibe had very little difficulty in finding a slender, pliable vine of great strength in the woods near

by. From it he cut a length of perhaps twenty five or thirty feet. Making this fast to one of the turtle's legs, or flippers, all three boys took hold of it, and ten minutes later the turtle lay on its back within the full light of their camp fire, which George had abundantly replenished with wood against the coming of his companions.

Max took a look at the creature and exclaimed:

"He's a huge green turtle, the daintiest thing to eat, that comes out of the sea! By the way, I wonder why he came out of the sea. Turtles do not often come ashore except of moonlight nights in the spring, when they want to lay their eggs."

"Well, never mind about that now, Max," said Billy. "This fellow came ashore just at the right time for us. Now, how shall we get at his supply of steaks—for we're hungry?"

Max took his big jack-knife and drove its blade through the creature's neck, severing the spinal cord.

"Now he's dead," the boy said, "but he won't seem so, when we get at his insides. His muscles will contract every time we touch them for days to come after we have removed his entrails and cut away steaks from his muscular parts. That doesn't indicate feeling or life either, but only the extraordinary muscular contractility that most

reptiles have—for the turtle is as truly a reptile as any snake is."

Billy made no remonstrance, but let Max talk on, because Max was meanwhile removing the lower shell of the turtle, the one now uppermost. When that was done he called for some large leaves, and carefully removing the liver, placed it on the leaves for safe keeping.

"The liver is one of the best parts of him," he said as he did this. "It is the best in fact except the green fat. That is a food that has no equal anywhere."

After removing the intestines, Max cut some strips or steaks from the muscular parts, and bade his companions wash them and the liver in sea water and put them on the coals to broil. George had already put a large yam into the hot ashes, and it was now well cooked, so that as soon as the turtle steaks were done the supper was ready. It was the first really substantial meal the hungry fellows had tasted since the day of the wreck and even before they had finished eating every one in the little company felt his strength returning and his spirits reviving.

But before supper was ready, the boys asked George what he had done with their clothes.

"They're in the house," answered the boy.

"In what house?"

"Why, the house I built today just under that little crag up there."

Without waiting for the steaks to cook, the boys left George to attend to them and went to inspect the "house." They found that their companion had selected a spot just under a little crag or cliff of coral rock, and had there constructed a rude but rain proof shelter. Setting up two poles forked at top, about ten feet in front of the cliff, and ten feet from each other, he had laid another pole in the two forks. From this to the cliff he had placed other poles, sloping them well, and on top of these he had laid a thick thatch of the broad palmete leaves—out of which palm leaf fans are made—with their pointed "fingers" downward. He had made widely sloping sides to the hut, covering them in the same way, but leaving the entire front open to the fire which was presently to be built there.

"How in the world did you manage to do all this, George, with your game leg?" asked Billy.

"I didn't. I did it with my hands, and I used the leg that isn't game to hop about on. The only trouble I had was with the poles which after all are only brushwood sticks. The palmetes grow so thickly around here that I didn't have to do much hopping to get them. And besides, I had all day to work in."

The boys were enthusiastic in appreciation of their comrade's thoughtfulness, and before supper they built a good fire in front of their new habitation, and spread palmete leaves thick over the ground within.

"That will serve the double purpose of a carpet and a bed," said Tibe when all was done. "I always did admire combination furniture."

"Now," he said, after the supper was done, "we're all tired and I move we go at once to bed."

"Not if we value our health," answered Billy. "After several days of semi-starvation, we have eaten heartily of a very rich kind of food. It won't do to go to sleep for at least two hours to come. I venture to suggest that we require Max to answer some of the many questions we have asked him from time to time. He's never had time to answer them before. There's plenty of time now."

CHAPTER XXIII

Turtles, Tides and Talks

AS it was still raining and somewhat cold, as it is apt to be at night in low latitudes, the boys had eaten their supper in the comfortable dryness of the new house with a crackling fire in front. George had managed to dry out their clothing, and after their all day's exposure to the rain, it was a luxury to sit thus in comfort while they talked.

"Now, first of all," said Tibe, "tell us about the turtle. Just now he is the most interesting subject I can think about. I didn't know turtles ever grew to such a size as that."

"Oh, they grow to twice that size often," answered Max, "at least down here in the Bahamas and West Indies. Ours weighs about 250 pounds. They often grow to five or six hundred. Most of those that are consumed in the great cities of Europe and America, are caught among these islands and on the coast and keys of Florida. Of moonlight nights in the spring and summer the turtles waddle up the beach to make nests in the

sand and lay their eggs. They dig a hole with their flippers, lay about a hundred eggs, cover them with dry sand and go away. A week or two later the mother turtle goes back to her nest and deposits about a hundred more eggs, and she does this once more about three weeks later still. Then her duty as a mother is done, and she pays no further attention to her nest or eggs, or to the young when they are hatched. The hot sun does the hatching, and the troops of little turtles make their way down the beach and into the sea, where a great many of them are eaten by sharks, dog-fish, sheepshead and other fish that have teeth and strong jaws. You see, when first hatched the turtle's shell is thin and soft, just as a young crab's is. But after the shell hardens the turtle's only enemy is man.

"On the Florida coast and keys, men go out on the sands of moonlight nights, armed with hand spikes, and turn on its back every large turtle they can find. Once on its back on shore, a turtle is entirely helpless. He cannot possibly turn himself over. So the turtle hunters simply leave their catch in that condition till the next day, when they go out with carts and gather them up."

"Don't they kill the poor creatures, and put them out of their misery?" asked Tibe, who was tender hearted.

"Oh, no. They want to get them to market alive. Otherwise many of them would spoil before they could be sold to consumers. A turtle will live for weeks even without food, but in order to fatten them and keep them fat, their captors usually feed them with green things—especially purslane, or what we commonly call 'pusley,'—until the time comes to eat them. Sometimes turtles are harpooned in the sea, but that kills them of course, and the effort of turtle hunters usually is to catch their game alive either on shore, or in a kind of water pound."

"Do we call doves 'turtle doves,' because they resemble turtles in any way?" asked George.

"No. Just the reverse. In old English the word 'turtle' meant turtle dove and nothing else, for there are no turtles in Europe. When America was discovered and turtles were found here in their native home the sailors called them by that name because of their resemblance to birds in several ways, particularly in their flippers, which resemble wings, and in their bills, which are almost exactly like those of birds."

"Then turtle soup is one of America's many good gifts to mankind?" asked George. "There are no turtles anywhere else?"

"There are no *green* turtles anywhere else, none of the species that furnishes green fat," an-

swered Max, "and there are no turtles of any kind in Europe. There are tortoises there, but no turtles. In America we have about a dozen different varieties, and by all odds the best of them are the green turtles."

"Better than the diamond back terrapin, do you think, Max?" asked the Marylander, ready to defend the reputation of his native state's chief luxury.

"The diamond backed terrapin is not a turtle at all, George, but a tortoise," answered Max. "I only said that the green turtle is the best of all the turtle family."

"Oh, I see," said George with a laugh. "So you did not mean to reflect upon the terrapin any more than upon that twin glory of the Chesapeake, the canvas back duck."

"Now, Max," said Billy, "you called our attention this morning to the fact that there is a very small tide in this little bay, but you didn't tell us why. Would you mind explaining?"

"Oh, not at all," returned Max, "though I should think you would see why for yourself."

"Perhaps I would," said Billy, "if my eyes and mind had been trained as yours have been by long experience at sea, to observe everything. As it is, I can't see the smallest reason why the tide shouldn't rise as high in this bay as it does out-

side on the beach there, or in that little inlet down by the lumber pile."

"Did you ever observe," asked Max, "that the entrance to this bay is very narrow—not over fifty or sixty feet wide?"

"Yes, but I don't see what that has to do with it."

"You will see if you'll think a little. This bay is about two hundred yards wide and it extends inland about the same distance or a trifle more. It is a very large basin, as compared with its entrance. Now all the tide water that comes into this basin must come in through that narrow entrance, and before enough of it can flow in to raise the level of the basin much, the ebb of the tide begins, and as soon as the level outside is lower than the level inside, the water flows out again."

"I see now," said the smaller boy. "Your explanation is as plain and simple as the multiplication table. Yet I never should have thought it out for myself. That is because I am stupid."

"But you are not stupid, Billy," replied Max. "On the contrary you have a very active and alert mind."

"Why couldn't I see such a simple thing as that for myself then?"

"Simply because you have not cultivated a

scientific *habit* of mind to any great extent. You yourself called attention to the fact that the tide rises higher in the little inlet than it does in this bay, and you asked me to tell you why. You should, instead, have asked yourself what differences there are in the conformation of the two bodies of water. Had you done that the reason for the tide difference would have been plain to you. This bay is very narrow at its mouth, and comparatively wide inside; the little inlet is very wide at its mouth—yawning like a sleepy schoolboy—and it grows steadily narrower as it goes inland. A great body of tide water freely enters its mouth and pushes its way up between the continually narrowing banks filling the estuary completely full."

"Then," asked George Smith, "is it the conformation of the coasts that determines the varying height of the tides at different places?"

"Mainly that," answered Max, "though there are other causes. The depth of the water is one, and the slope of the sea bottom as it approaches the coast is another. Still another, and a very important influence, is the meeting of two tides. For example, at Galveston there is only one flood and one ebb each day, instead of the two floods and the two ebbs that generally appear. This is because a tide that comes up the South American

coast and into the Gulf of Mexico through the channel south of Cuba, is almost exactly six hours later in reaching Galveston than the tide that comes from the North Atlantic and enters the Gulf through the channel between Cuba and Florida. Thus the low water of the one tide coincides exactly with the high water of the other, the two neutralizing each other and leaving no half day tide at all, but only a single day tide. You see the tides are caused by the attraction of the sun and moon, but mainly the moon. By the law of gravitation those two spheres are pulling all the time at the earth, trying to draw it to them. They would do that in fact and smash things up, if it were not for the earth's swing around the sun, which causes what is called centrifugal force—or a tendency to fly off as a stone does when you let it escape from the restraint of a sling. As water is fluid, of course it yields easily to the attraction of the sun and moon. If there were no land in the way, the attraction of the sun and moon would cause two great waves to form, one on each side of the earth, and as the earth revolves, these two waves would ceaselessly follow the sun and moon around the world. Wherever land interferes, these waves roll in upon the shore as tides and push their way into all harbors, bays and river mouths. If the tide wave

finds a wide mouthed passage, narrowing and shoaling as it runs up, there will be a very high tide at that place, growing higher and higher as it ascends the passageway, because the narrow and shoal estuary cannot hold all the water that enters the wide mouth, without sending the tide to a great height up the banks. Thus in the Bay of Fundy, the tide rises to thirty-five and forty feet, while in some broad bays with narrow entrances, it rises only a foot or two, and in the vast Mediterranean Sea there is no tide at all because the entrance at Gibraltar is so narrow and the sea so big."

"That is very interesting," said Billy, "but you promised also to tell us sometime about spring tides and neap tides."

"Well," said Max, "as the tides are caused by the attraction of the sun and moon, and as the two are constantly changing their relative positions with respect to the earth, there must be a considerable variation in the height of the tides. Thus when the sun and moon are 'in conjunction,' that is to say are on the same side of the earth, as they are at the time of the new moon, they both pull together, and together they raise a much higher wave than at ordinary times. When that occurs, the high water of the tide is higher and the low water lower, than ordinarily. That

we call a spring tide. The same thing happens when the sun and moon are 'in opposition,' or on opposite sides of the earth. You remember there are two tide waves always, and when the sun and moon are in opposition they draw the water both ways, into higher waves than ordinarily, giving a correspondingly greater difference between high and low water than at ordinary times. This occurs when the moon is at the full, and is the second of the spring tides in each month. But when the sun and moon are 'in quadrature'—that is to say, when they are so situated that a line drawn from the sun to the centre of the earth, and another line drawn from the moon to the centre of the earth would form a right angle,—then the two pull against each other on the tide wave, and we have a neap tide, or one of which the high water is lower than usual and the low water higher than usual. Let me illustrate."

Taking up a stick, Max drew some rude diagrams in the sand, like these:



(Sun and moon in opposition. Spring tide.)



(Sun and moon in conjunction. Spring tide.)



(Sun and moon in quadrature. Neap tide.)

" Now," said Max, " I'm not going to tell you anything more about the tides or anything else tonight. We must go to sleep. It is late and we have a hard day's work laid out for us for to-morrow. So, good-night."

CHAPTER XXIV

Max Asserts His Authority

WHEN morning broke the weather was clear and the sea unusually calm.

"Everything is favorable now," said Max. "If we hurry through breakfast and go to work at once it will be low water slack just about the time that we get our timbers to the mouth of the bay. Then, as the flood begins, the tide will bring them in for us without any exertion on our part. It flows like a mill tail through that narrow entrance. But we must hurry or we shall miss that."

So each took a piece of turtle steak and a sweet potato in his hands, and they set off down the beach, eating as they went. There was a fresh water spring near their place of working, so that they could drink after their meal.

"It isn't up to the level of hot coffee," said Tibe, as he rose from the spring after drinking, "but when one is thirsty, clear, cool water has distinct claims upon attention as a tipple."

"It certainly has," said Billy drinking in his turn, "and I really suppose that on most occa-

sions we should be the better for it, if we contented ourselves with simple water, drinking no tea or coffee at all."

"We drink tea and coffee for the sake of the stimulation they afford," said Max, "and for nothing else. Tea and coffee contain a stimulating principle called 'theine' in tea and 'caffeine' in coffee. The two are practically the same. And the heat of hot tea or coffee is also a stimulant. Ordinarily a healthy boy or young man does not need stimulation of any kind, beyond that which the shock of a cold bath affords. But when one is worn out with exposure, starvation and loss of sleep, as we were when we came ashore, I suppose a gentle stimulant like tea or coffee, is really of advantage. Now we must get to work. First we must cut some limber and strong vines—two of them in twenty foot lengths, and one—I'll get that myself—thirty or forty or fifty feet long."

This task was an easy one as the forest on that part of the island abounded in climbing vines which grew slenderly to great lengths. Then the boys rolled their three timbers to the water's edge, and Billy and Tibe began arranging them side by side. But Max, coming out of the woods, called to them:

"No, no, fellows. Not that way. We must put them end to end. I'll show you."

He fastened his long vine to the end of one timber, and, with the assistance of his comrades, he rolled it into the water, making it fast to a log on the beach. Next he made one of the shorter vines fast to another timber and rolled it into the water. Then towing it up to the first beam, he tied its forward end to the rear end of the other stick, so that in towing, one timber would follow the other. Proceeding in the same way with the remaining timber he presently had all three fastened together, end to end.

"Why do you do it in that way, Max?" asked Billy. "Why not lay the logs side by side and tow them as a raft?"

"Because they will tow more easily in this way. If we put the three side by side the water resistance would be much greater than if we tow them in a trail. In this way there will be very little resistance beyond that of the first log. It will make a wake for the others, and they will follow it almost without any pull at all."

The boys had again left their clothing at the camp, as their work was to be mainly done in the water. Seizing the long towing vine they waded out to where the water was two or three feet deep, and all three pulling together they slowly made their way along shore toward the bay. It was very slow work however. The timbers were

heavy and the surf, light as it was, kept driving them on shore, and, in receding leaving them there. To avoid this difficulty in some degree, they went out into deeper water, and waded up to their chests in the sea. But in thus avoiding one difficulty they encountered another. In the deeper water their foothold was of course insecure, the water tending all the time to lift their feet off bottom. Yet little by little they made progress, stopping now and then to rest on the shore and get their breath.

The tide had turned half an hour before the boys with their raft reached the mouth of the bay, and the water was now rushing in through the entrance like a mountain torrent. When they reached the suck of the current Max threw himself upon the forward log, as one mounts a horse, and directed his companions to climb upon the other timbers in the same way. A few minutes later, they were shot into the calm waters of the bay looking like three horsemen riding in single file. Dropping into the water and swimming, they soon pushed the timbers ashore and arranged them side by side, binding them together with the vines into a sort of raft, one end of which was held against the sands by the towline, which was made fast to a tree, while the other end was afloat.

As it was now nearly noon, the three went at once to their camp shelter, their skins stinging with sunburn, for a wet skin sunburns much more quickly than a dry one. They were not afraid of blistering however. They had become too well tanned for that in their Bluffton swimming and boating experiences. As they started toward the camp they saw George Smith hastily secrete something under a pile of brush.

"Wonder what it is that George is hiding from us," said Tibe.

"Don't ask," replied Max. "One's privacy should be just as sacred from invasion as his property is. If George is hiding anything from us, he has a perfect right to do so, particularly as we know him to be a loyal friend."

George had a yam ready roasted—it was the last but one, of their supply—and it did not take long for the boys to slip on their clothes, go to the spring, where the turtle was kept for the sake of the coolness, cut out a few steaks and broil them. The meal over, Max ordered a rest of half an hour before resuming work.

"After we've digested our food," he said from his position flat on his back on the sands, "I want you, Billy, to go after a fresh supply of yams. I'll direct you how to find them. Take my shirt and Tibe's and bring back as big a load

of them as you can carry. There's a little patch of sugar cane growing wild near that old garden spot. Suppose you bring some of that too. Its juice is very nutritious, and it will give a badly needed variety to our food."

"Does there happen to be a bag of salt growing up there too?" asked Tibe. "For if I ever was famished for anything I am famished now for a taste of salt. If we only had a kettle now, we'd make some out of this sea water. It's about the saltest sea water I ever saw."

"It is so salt," said Max, "that in some of these islands people make great quantities of salt for export, by simply letting the sea water flow at high tide into shallow pools which they make in the sand. When the tide goes out they make a bank to keep the next tide from coming into the pools. Most of the water in the pools filters through the sand, which is already too full of salt to take up any more. Then the sun dries up the pools leaving great blocks of rock salt scattered about. I noticed this morning on a flat bit of beach down there that the sea and sun had been running a little salt factory of that sort without any aid from man. The sand is full of salt crystals, some of them as big as a walnut. We'll get some when we go down there."

"But why isn't the whole beach salted in a similar way?" asked Tibe.

"Because each returning tide washes away the half formed salt left by its predecessor. The little patch of sand where I found the salt isn't reached by ordinary tides. Only at spring tides or in heavy storms does the water cover it, and it is so flat that the receding tide leaves it very slowly. Indeed I suspect that the edge of it nearest the sea is higher than its main level, so that much of the salt water brought in by spring tides remains there and dries up, leaving its salt as a deposit. Anyhow there's an abundance of salt there, and I should have brought some of it away this morning if we had been returning by land. This time we'll gather a few pounds of it on palm leaves, and after we get our next raft here one of us—whichever is least tired—will go back after it."

"Tired or not," said Tibe, "I volunteer to lead that forlorn hope. For I'd give a gold dollar—if I had one—for the privilege of sprinkling salt over the next piece of meat I eat."

"So would I," said George Smith, "and there's another thing. We can't keep our turtle long unless we salt it."

"That is true," Max answered. "So we'll

gather a good supply, and both of us will go after it this evening, Tibe. Now we must be off, to tan our skins to a still richer brown."

"By the way, Max," said Tibe as the two slipped off their clothing, "if we ever get back to civilization again, we'll be able to set ourselves up in business as bronze statues. It will be a nice quiet occupation,—a trifle monotonous perhaps, but on the whole agreeable, in warm weather at least."

On their arrival at the lumber pile Tibe wanted to go first to the salt beach, but Max overruled him.

"It is a case," he said, "in which the old adage applies—'business before pleasure.' We must get our lumber ready for towing before we do anything else, Tibe. You see we'll never get back to civilization where bronze statues are appreciated, if we don't devote ourselves diligently to the work of saving the *Sairey Ann*. Her cotton bales are slowly absorbing water, and she is slowly sinking deeper in the water. So we must lose no time."

It did not take them long to gather a dozen of the white pine boards together, pile them one on top of another, and bind them securely together with vines. This gave to the collection the appearance of a single stick of timber, about a

foot square and sixteen feet long. That done, they cut two large palm leaves six or eight feet across and brought their edges partly together, making them into a kind of bags or baskets. Into each of these they put perhaps half a bushel of salt, and deposited the baskets well up on the beach, near the "lumber yard" as they called that part of the beach where the lumber ship had come ashore many months before.

With a long vine for towline the two slowly dragged their bundle of boards through the water. But by the time that they approached the mouth of the bay, the tide was strongly running out. It was impossible, of course, to force the raft against the current, so they drew it well up on the sands and left it there.

"We'll tow it in on the next flood," said Max. "That will occur about midnight, and so we shall not get much sleep to-night. Now we'll run up to the camp, put on our clothes and go after our salt. We'll get back in time for supper."

They found Billy at the camp. He had just returned with his load of sweet potatoes, yams and sugar cane, and he looked weary. But he insisted on going with his comrades after the salt supply.

When they had reached a point well out of earshot of the camp, Billy said:

"Max, I insisted upon coming with you because I have something to tell you."

Billy spoke with great seriousness, and he was manifestly somewhat disturbed in his mind.

"What is it, Billy?" asked Max, stopping and standing still to hear Billy's reply.

"Why, it is just this. You remember that as we approached the camp at noon, we saw George Smith hastily hide something?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, when I got back to the camp again just now, I came upon him rather unawares. As I did so he hastily turned his back to me, quickly took up something and, keeping it hidden behind his person, hopped away into the bushes with it. When he came back he was obviously embarrassed. I thought it my duty to tell you about the matter—particularly as he belongs to the other side in the war, and is now no longer a prisoner on parole."

"Is that all?" asked Max. "Have you anything further to tell me?"

"No, that is all."

"Very well. Come on then."

With that Max resumed the journey. He remained absolutely silent as he walked on, and his companions, seeing him in deep thought uttered no word to disturb him.

When the party arrived at the point where the salt baskets had been left, Max threw himself down and said:

"Sit down both of you. I want to talk to you."

When the pair had taken their seats, Max resumed, speaking slowly, and evidently choosing his words carefully.

"I am a trifle ashamed of you, Billy," he said by way of introduction. Billy's face looked like an interrogation mark, but he said nothing. After a pause, Max went on:

"We know George Smith. We have had experiences together which have given us an insight into his character such as men rarely get into the character of anybody. Now you know, or ought to know, that character is as much a fact as complexion is, or the color of one's hair and eyes. More than that, it is about the most unchangeable fact that exists in the world. A man may dye his hair and stain his face, but he can in no way alter his character, except by slow degrees, requiring years of dissipation or self indulgence or some other sort of wrong doing. That is why it is so important to form a good character in youth. It is something that one must carry with him as long as he lives. It is a lifelong, dominating force from which no man can escape. He may violate

its commands upon sudden impulse sometimes, but never with deliberation and of set purpose. Now, as I was saying a while ago, we know George Smith's character beyond any possibility of doubt. We know that he is honest, truthful, generous of mind, and utterly incapable of doing a mean or treacherous thing. Why then should we be disturbed by the discovery that he is hiding something from us? We know that he is not doing that with any wrongful or treacherous intent. Whatever his motive may be, it is not a dishonorable one or one hostile to us. We have therefore no right to insult him by inquiring into it. I am commander of this expedition. I am responsible for everything that concerns it, and I take the responsibility of saying that I will not permit any inquiry to be made, or any reflection, direct or indirect, upon George Smith's honor, friendship, or loyalty to us as his friends. Now come on. It is time for us to start for camp."

Neither Billy nor Tibe made any answer to what Max had said. He had not expected that they would, and he had not intended that they should. His tone and manner, as well as his words, effectually prohibited a reply. So in silence the party returned to the camp, bearing their precious burden of salt.

CHAPTER XXV

George Smith Tells a Little Story

NIGHT was falling as the party returned to the camp, utterly weary with their unusually hard day's work.

"Now," said George Smith, "you fellows are to sit down or lie down, while I get the supper. You're tired to the verge of exhaustion, and you are not to do another thing. I've got a yam ready to take out of the ashes, and I'll do the rest."

The boys were ready enough to rest a little. They lay down upon the sand and in a minute all were asleep. Ten minutes passed perhaps before George waked them with a summons to supper. As they rose to a sitting posture, they saw a large palm leaf spread before them, and in the centre of it a baked fish, weighing eight or ten pounds.

Eagerly the boys questioned their comrade, not one of them being able even to guess where the boy had got the welcome food supply.

For answer he said:

"Eat first. After you have found out whether the fish is good or not, I'll tell you all about it."

"Whether it is good or not!" exclaimed Max. "I can answer that question without waiting to taste the fish. I know the gentleman's kind. He's a sheepshead, and if there is any better in the sea, I have never happened to encounter it."

Meanwhile he was helping his companions with his jack-knife and a forked stick, laying a liberal supply of the fish on the palm leaf which each of the youths had in his lap to serve as a plate.

"I say fellows," said Tibe, "let's pulverize some of our salt before we begin. It is in lumps ranging from the size of a pea to that of a big walnut, but we can crush it in an oyster shell, and we must have salt with our fish."

"The fish is already salted," said George Smith quietly. "I did that before baking it. And if you want more salt, here's a shell full," setting his oyster shell salt cellar on the leaf that served as a table.

"Where did you get salt?" asked Max in astonishment. "It hasn't been ten minutes since we brought in our supply, and the fish must have been baking long before that."

"Go on with your eating," said George. "If this fish, with salt in it seems as good to you as it does to me, your curiosity can wait till your appetites are satisfied. Anyhow, I am not going to suspend my eating to talk. After we have

finished I'll tell you little boys the 'Story of Georgie Smith and the Big Fish.'"

The oysters grow very large in the Bahamas, and, in order that the boys might have water at hand to drink with their meal, George Smith had selected a number of the largest shells, each holding a pint at least and filled them with water from the spring in anticipation of supper. This, added to the welcome change of diet rendered the night's supper the most enjoyable meal the shipwrecked boys had eaten since they left Charleston. They ate heartily, but an end must come to all things, and at last there came an end to the supper. Then the boys plied George with questions anew.

"Very well," he replied. "If you'll listen I'll tell you children that little story I promised you. I told you, Max, that while I couldn't help much in your hard work, because of my game leg, I intended to help as much as I could in other ways. So when you suggested, the other night, that we might make fish lines out of some of the cotton in the bale marked Circle X, I determined to try my hand at that. I worked only when you fellows were away from the camp, for fear I should fail, and get myself laughed at. Besides, I wanted to surprise you. I pulled out a good bunch of cotton from a hole I made in the bagging at the end of the bale, and brought it up here. I tried to twist

this into a kind of yarn, and after a good many failures I succeeded in making three strands of rough but pretty strong yarn, forty feet long. I then twisted the three together as evenly as I could manage, and succeeded in making a clumsy but stout fish line."

"Let's see it!" cried Billy.

"Well, there it is," handing the rude string to his companion. "It isn't pretty to look at, but it caught the fish we've just been eating. I had just finished my line when you fellows came to camp at noon, and I had to hide it under some brush, as I was more than ever disposed to surprise you fellows with a fish supper. When you went away again to work, leaving your clothes behind, I picked Tibe's pocket and got a fishhook. Fastening it to my line, and using a small oyster shell for a sinker, I hobbled out to the end of those timbers you had brought and began fishing, with mussels for bait. I caught eight smaller fish—three quarters of a pound each in weight, I should say—and finally I hooked the big sheepshead and landed him. I put the smaller fish into a pool of salt water which I dug in the sand with an oyster shell, and was just getting ready to clean the big one, when Billy strolled into the camp, and pretty nearly caught me in the act. But by using my body for a screen, I managed to hide the fish

in the bushes, without letting Billy see it. When you fellows went away, I cleaned the fish. Remembering what you had said, Max, about the way the sea sometimes leaves salt behind, and being very anxious to make the most of my prize, I hobbled around to the beach on the other side of the bay, and looked for depressions in the sand, well away from the water. I found one at last,—a very small depression, which must be a pool at very high water. It is dry at present, and there is a good layer of salt on the sand, in crystals about as big as a pea. I gathered about a pint of them, and brought them to camp, where I ground them up with one oyster shell for my pestle and another for my mortar. Then I salted my fish, wrapped it in a thick layer of wet leaves, and put it into the hot ashes to bake. There that's the whole story of Little George Smith and the Big Fish."

The boys were profuse in their praise of George's industry and devotion to the common cause. Billy seemed especially eager to emphasize his appreciation. When he had finished, Max said, with a good deal of earnestness, and looking intently at Billy,

"One's character is as much a fact as the color of his hair and eyes."

To George Smith the remark seemed irrelevant

to anything that had been said. But Max often made seemingly irrelevant remarks, and besides it was time for sleep, as work must begin again at midnight. A cool sea breeze fanned the faces of the weary fellows, as they lay quite outside the shelter, and they slept refreshingly.

CHAPTER XXVI

Three Male Flora McFlimseys

ABOUT the middle of the night George Smith hobbled down to the water's edge and found the tide coming in. He at once aroused the others, as he had been asked to do, in order that they might bring in their raft of pine boards. They were heavy and dull with unfinished sleep, but they yawningly stripped off their clothes and proceeded to the shore north of the bay. A quick plunge into the water set their blood going again and roused their minds to their usual activity.

Together they towed the raft along the shore to the entrance and then rode in to the bay astride of it, as they had before done with the square timbers. This work occupied perhaps an hour, and another hour was spent in bringing the lumber ashore and securing it near the timbers. Then the weary three resumed their clothing and lay down to sleep till breakfast time.

Just before the dawn George arose quietly, and making no noise placed a yam in among the coals and hot ashes. After that he went to his fish

pound and by the now dawning light dressed four fish, which he salted, wrapped in wet leaves, as he had done with the big fish, and snugly buried in the ashes to cook. He next made a number of trips to the spring, bringing back each time two large oyster shells full of water.

By this time his companions were awake and ready for a morning dip in the bay, preparatory to breakfast and a hard day's work.

"The turtle has gone bad, fellows," said George Smith as he distributed the fish, "and so I had to give you a fish breakfast instead of steaks."

The boys, who had quickly tired of turtle meat, protested their entire contentment with the meal they were eating.

"You cook fish admirably, George," said Max presently.

"Oh, I'm a pretty fair cook I believe," answered the boy. "And I like to cook, but I detest washing dishes and pots and pans. As we have no dishes and no pots and no pans, I escape the disagreeables of a cook's occupation. Still I wish we had a frying pan and a soup kettle, I could vary our diet then."

"Perhaps we shall be able to get into the *Sairey Ann's* locker presently," said Billy. "If we do we'll get a frying pan and some bacon, and then we can fry our fish for a change. There are some

other things in that locker too that I'm keeping my mental eye upon. But we must think of business now. What's the programme for today, Max?"

The commander of the party had already thought out his plans for the immediate future and was ready with his reply.

"First of all I want you, George, to do a little of the dish washing that you detest. I want you to take everything out of the turtle's shell, scrape the inside of it as clean as possible, scour it out with sand and sea water and lay it out in the sun to dry."

"What's all that for?" asked Tibe.

"Why, so that we may use it for a water pail. It will hold a good many gallons, and if we fill it once a day we needn't run to the spring with our oyster shells every time we want to drink."

"All right. I'll do that," said George with eager readiness. "What next?"

"Why, next I want you to go fishing while we are laying out another job for you. Get as good a supply as you can, and put them in your pool. It won't take you long, as the tide has turned and will be at half ebb before you're through with the turtle shell. The fish bite best on the half tides either way. That's all for you till we get your next job ready."

"Would you mind telling me now what that next job is to be?" asked the boy. "You see if I know what is wanted I may be able to think out ways of doing it."

"Oh, well, we fellows are going into the woods to cut a large number of vines, big and little, this morning. We'll need some of them in making the raft we shall use to stand on while we work at the ship—for as we have no nails we must fasten our timbers together with vines. Then we'll need others to serve as stays for the ship and pull-ropes in our efforts to right her. I want you to make us some vine ladders out of still others—I'll show you how. With vine ladders, which we'll find or make some means of securing in place, we can climb about the ship as we cannot do without them. I want two long ones, made of very flexible vines. We'll bring you the vines. In the meantime you can wash dishes and go fishing."

Then, turning to the others Max said: "Come, boys, we must get to work," and the three bare-headed fellows—for all the caps had been lost in the wreck—set off into the woods.

"Be careful of your clothes, fellows," Max called out as they entered the tangle of cane, vines and undergrowth, "or we shall be male Flora McFlimseys presently with nothing to wear. We are already in tatters, and our boots are going fast.

If we get into a slightly worse plight than our present one, it will not be worth our while to try to reach Nassau. They wouldn't permit us to land."

It was a good deal of work to select the vines best suited to their purposes, cut them, disentangle them from the meshes into which they had woven themselves, and drag them through the underbrush to the camp, and it was past noon before Max felt that the supply brought in was adequate to the need.

George had in the meanwhile caught some fish, and it was decided that all should rest while the simple dinner was in course of preparation. Poor fellows, they needed rest now even more than they needed food, and Max, who was watchfully observing both his companions and himself said, during dinner:

"Boys, we can't keep up this pace. We'll break completely down if we try it, to say nothing of becoming seriously ill. So I'm going to forbid all hard work for the rest of the afternoon. We'll get on all the faster tomorrow and the next day for taking a rest now. The only thing I am going to do is to make myself a pair of shoes."

"Make yourself a pair of shoes!" exclaimed Tibe and Billy in a breath.

"Yes. The boots that I have on are pretty

nearly at the end of their usefulness. I'm going to save what remains of them to wear when we reach a habitable port, if we ever accomplish that, so I'm going to make myself another pair."

"Out of what, Max?"

"Out of the long gray moss that hangs from the trees in the woods back there."

"But how can you make shoes out of that?"

"I'll show you," answered the young commander; "and I strongly advise you to follow my example."

Max started into the woods, the other two following him. Each gathered a large armful of the Spanish moss, and cut a considerable number of small, twine-like vines, as flexible as whip cord and almost as strong as wire.

Returning to the camp, Max sat down and began the tedious task of straightening out the tangled threads of the moss, using his fingers first and his pocket-comb afterwards. When he had accomplished this, the others imitating the process, he wrapped skeins of the moss threads about his feet, ankles and lower legs, to a thickness of three inches on the bottoms of his feet, and two inches at all other points. Then with the cord-like vines he quilted the mass together, and slipping one of his products off his foot, he held up something closely resembling a moccasin, if the reader can

imagine a moccasin made of stuff two or three inches thick.

"It looks for all the world like one of the celebrated seven league boots, as those aids to rapid locomotion were depicted by the artist who illustrated my earliest book of nursery stories," said Billy. "It has the same graceful contour and a similar delicacy of outline."

"It isn't beautiful," said Max, contemplating his handiwork, "but at any rate it will protect my feet, and so long as we remain on the island we are not likely to go much into fashionable society. So you'd better go on with your work and get your own shoes done. My job is done, and now I'm going to sleep awhile."

CHAPTER XXVII

A Supper in Courses

DURING the time of the shoe making George Smith had worked diligently at his task of ladder construction. Max had shown him how, but being an ingenious and quick-witted fellow, George had greatly improved upon the instruction. Max had suggested the use of two vines on each side of the ladder with cross vines for rungs, to be placed with their ends between each pair of side vines and tied in place with smaller vines. George used only one vine for each side of the ladder, and used sticks, instead of vines for rungs. These he fastened securely in place by notching them at the ends and securing them in loops of very small vine. In this way he made a much lighter ladder and a very much better one. It weighed scarcely more than half as much as if he had doubled the side vines; it was greatly more flexible; its rungs were stiff, holding its sides well apart; and it was quite strong enough to hold all three of the boys at once if need be. Another advantage was that George



"'Are these good to eat?'"

could make the ladder in this way much more quickly than he could have done in the other. Before Max had finished his shoes, George had a ladder done, and Max highly approved it.

Announcing his purpose to manufacture a second one after supper, George hopped off toward his fish pound, using a stout stick, as he always did, in lieu of a second leg. A little before sunset he came hobbling out of the bushes carrying three red breasted, brown backed birds about the size of broiling chickens—that is to say, weighing about a pound and a half each. The birds were squawking and cackling almost like chickens. George held them up and asked:

"Are these good to eat?"

"Good to eat?" exclaimed Billy. "Are spring chickens good to eat? Are quails good to eat? Is a pheasant or a grouse good to eat? Where did you get those birds, George? But off with their heads before you answer, and we'll have a marsh hen supper to-night."

"Now tell me what they are," said George as his companions proceeded to pick the fat birds.

"Why, they are marsh hens," answered Billy, whose knowledge of wild birds was considerable; "known scientifically as the 'Rallus elegans,' and science had all its wits about it when it gave them that name, for not only is the bird beautiful in its

plumage, but as a dainty something to eat, it has no superior except perhaps its smaller cousin the sora of Virginia. Now where did you get the birds, or rather I should ask *how* did you get them? For of course you got them in the marsh as they live nowhere else."

"Well, you see," said George, "when we first landed, Max suggested that we must presently set some traps and catch something fit to eat. You fellows have been too busy to carry out that plan, but I've had plenty of time, so I've been setting traps all around here, and this afternoon I caught these three dwellers in the swamp. I didn't know certainly whether they were good to eat or not, so I brought them alive to camp, meaning to let them go again if they were not edible. But tell me more about them, Billy."

"They belong," said Billy, "to the family of rails. There are several varieties of rails, from the small ones of New Jersey, which are not much bigger than quails, to this kind, which is the largest of all. They are everywhere called marsh hens, and all the varieties are deemed choice luxuries of the table. But the kind called sora, and this kind are the choicest of all. At this time of year they are as fat as butter, so fat that they can't fly more than twenty yards or so, but their running gear is always in good order. In the swamps

of Virginia the sora are so abundant and so fat and sluggish in flight during September and early October that people go out in boats and knock the birds down with paddles, instead of shooting them. But with the first sharp frost the sora completely disappear from Virginia."

"What becomes of them?"

"That is a question which nobody has ever answered satisfactorily," Billy replied. "The negroes firmly believe that they turn to frogs. Of course they migrate, but how they manage that when their flying capacity is so small, it is difficult to understand. Besides, that particular variety of rail which is called sora, is never found south of Cape Hatteras even in winter. The kind of rail that you have caught—the Rallus elegans, —abounds on the coast of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. I didn't know it was found also in the Bahamas."

"But why not?" asked Max. "These islands, or the more westerly of them, lie only a few hundred miles off the Florida coast, and in many ways resemble that coast in climate, soil and products—animal and vegetable."

"Well, anyhow," said Billy, as he split one of the marsh hens down the back, making what cooks call a "spread eagle," of it, "anyhow there couldn't be a better supper than we shall have

this night. Let's be stylish, and dine in courses. If George will cook enough fish for a fish course, I'll broil one and a half of these birds and save as much more for to-morrow. A yam we can call cucumber salad with the fish, and mushrooms or green peas, or potatoes à la créole, when we are eating it with the birds."

"It is astonishing," said George, as the little company picked the bones of the broiled birds, "how quickly and completely you fellows have recovered your spirits. Two or three days ago you were moping around here with faces as long as my arm and with your minds beset with melancholy broodings. Now your cheerfulness, and even your playfulness have returned, in spite of the fact that you are almost broken down with overwork."

"That's easily explained," replied Max. "There are two causes for the change—one of them physical and the other moral."

"What are they?"

"Why, three or four days ago we were badly underfed, on a diet of oysters alone. Since then we've eaten abundantly of turtle meat and nourishing fish. Things always look brighter to a well-fed man than to a half starved one. But the moral change is even more important. Three or four days ago, we had no hope. Without a boat

and without tools with which to construct one, we saw no possible way in which we might even hope ever to leave this nearly barren island. Now that we have at least a chance of righting our ship, we are living and working under the stimulus of hope. We have largely to thank you for that change, George."

"How so?"

"Why, it was you who first suggested a plan for getting the *Sairey Ann* on her keel again."

"Yes, but my plan was an impracticable one," said the boy.

"No, it was not. It was defective in certain details, particularly in that it did not reckon with the centre board, but on the whole it was and is so entirely practicable, that we're going to act upon it."

"Thank you," replied George, modestly. "If I have been able to help in ever so small a way, I am glad."

"Help?" broke in Tibe. "Why, wasn't it you that made the fish line, and plundered my pockets, and caught fish for us, and brought water in oyster shells, and built our palatial residence and all that? Why, you have helped more than all the rest of us together."

"Now," said Max after the supper was over and George was again busy with his rope ladder

making, "we must get a good, full night's sleep tonight, and in the morning we'll begin active work on the *Sairey Ann*. The task of getting her into a position becoming to so matronly a craft, will occupy a long time, but I hope, before another night falls, to have solved the preliminary difficulties, or at least to have found out whether or not we can do the thing at all, and if so, how."

"Just how will you set to work, Max?" asked Tibe.

"I don't know yet with any certainty. We've got to study that out, and act according to circumstances. We can't lay our plans with any definiteness till we study all the details of the problem by daylight."

"In the meantime," said Billy, quite irrelevantly, "I wish we had a few dozens of our marsh hen's eggs for breakfast. They are the daintiest and best flavored eggs that ever were laid by any known species of fowl."

"Perhaps I can find some of their nests," said George, "if you'll tell me what their nesting habits are, Billy."

"No, you can't; not at this time of year. The rails nest only in the spring and early summer. So in saying what I did, I was merely indulging the bad habit of idle and futile wishing for the unattainable. If it were spring instead of autumn,

eggs of one kind or another would be our chief food supply. Almost all eggs are good to eat and very nutritious, and in the spring this island, undisturbed as it is by man, must abound in the eggs of all sorts of land and sea birds, to say nothing of the supply the turtles would give us. Every turtle's nest would yield from 100 to 300 eggs of a quality that no barn-yard fowl ever thinks of laying. But it is October now, and pretty well along in October at that, so, eggs are out of the question, or nearly so. We may now and then find the nest of some bird disposed to raise a late brood. But there aren't many such."

"It is time to go to sleep," said Max, who was already stretched upon his back, with his eyes closed.

CHAPTER XXVIII

At Work on the Wreck

BREAKFAST the next morning, consisted of oysters and fish, the remaining birds being kept for supper. The boys were disposed to eat rather lightly in the morning and at midday, making the evening meal in fact their dinner, a wise course, as it is never well to eat very heartily until the day's work is done, when the work is hard, either physically or mentally, and theirs was hard in both ways.

Almost immediately after breakfast, the boys, under Max's direction, arranged the three timbers about five or six feet apart, and covered them with the boards, which they secured in place with vines. Then, using long poles for propelling purposes, they pushed the raft thus made, to the place where the ship rode at anchor. The distance from the shore being small, this occupied little time. Standing on the raft, while the boys slowly worked it around the wreck, Max minutely inspected every part of the ship, except, of course, the port side, which was under water.

When he came face to face with the deck, he turned to Billy and said:

"She has sunk so much, Billy, that the companionway is within easy reach now. I want you to climb up to it, and see if you can't get the locker open. Fortunately it is on the starboard side and well out of water."

Billy had little difficulty in reaching the companionway, but it required a good deal of work to get the locker open. When that was accomplished a good deal of the contents of that storageroom dropped out into the water that filled the lower or port side of the vessel.

Hastily gathering up these supplies, Billy pitched them out on the raft, before they had time to take much hurt from the water. There was nearly a hundred pounds of bacon and dry salted pork, a barrel of ship biscuit, a large, water tight tin of coffee, a little keg of sorghum molasses, which was fermenting violently and oozing out between the staves, and a few other supplies of a less important character.

Having emptied the locker, Billy proceeded to grope around the little cabin—neck deep in water, for the cooking utensils. These, consisting of the coffee pot, a large frying pan and a large sheet iron kettle, all considerably rusted with salt water, he succeeded at last in finding. Then Max

bade him drop down to the raft, and, pushing the floating platform around the sail that lay spread out on the water, to the bow of the ship, he directed Billy to make an effort to reach the entrance to the lazaret. "Lazaret" is the name which the sailors sometimes give to a little room below decks, used for the storage of spars, sails, cordage, pulley blocks, tools and the like. The word properly means a hospital, and the sailors' use of it was probably suggested by the fact that broken or otherwise damaged ship's gear is deposited there, making of it a sort of hospital for disabled articles.

Billy succeeded in reaching the round metal plate that covered the lazaret, but he could not get it open, as it was screwed into its surrounding metal frame. Tibe and Max both went to his assistance, and the three labored long at the task, but without avail. The failure was sorely disappointing to Max, who had hoped to get some pulley blocks and ropes out of that place of reserved supplies, but finding all efforts to open it futile, he gave it up, and decided to get on as best he could without the badly needed appliances.

He pushed the raft again to the stern and bade Billy climb once more to the companion way.

"See if you can find the sextant," he said. "I

remember that it was below decks when we capsized. But it is probably under water now."

Billy searched diligently and after a while made three or four dives into the bunk on the port side. Each time he felt over a portion of the bunk and of the ship's side below it. At the fourth attempt, he came up, pushed his head out of the hatchway and holding up the sextant cried out triumphantly—"I've got it, I've got it."

"Don't come down yet, Billy," said Max, taking the instrument and carefully bestowing it on the raft, after examining to see that it was uninjured. "One good turn deserves another, you know, and now that you've recovered the sextant, you must get the chronometer out if possible. Tibe and I will climb up and help you. First I'll hand you the end of a vine ladder," suiting the action to the word. "See if you can't make it fast to something."

Billy stood upon the combing of the hatchway, but he could not reach the starboard bulwarks.

"That's just about Tibe's height," he said. "I say, Tibe, I'll get inside and hold the end of the ladder over the edge of the hatchway while you climb up it. Then you can make it fast above."

With that Billy crept back into the little hatchway, and drew the end of the flexible ladder in

after him. Putting his whole weight upon the inner end of it he called to Tibe to climb up. The tall boy did so, and Billy then helped him secure a foothold on the upper edge of the combing, from which he was easily able to reach the bulwark above. He made the ladder securely fast to it, thus furnishing an easy means of passing back and forth between the raft and the ship's perpendicular deck.

Max mounted at once, and the three set to work to unscrew the post to which the chronometer box was attached. Fortunately the chronometer was not in the water, and so far as a hasty examination could enable Max to judge, the timepiece was uninjured either in itself or in any of the complex arrangements of brass rods and pivots by which a chronometer is kept always level and always right side up, no matter how much the ship may pitch or roll, even to the extent of turning bottom upwards. After a good deal of effort the time keeper was got out and, with the post that held it, laid carefully on the raft.

"Now we can find out just where we are," said Tibe, rejoicing.

"No, we cannot," answered Max. "The chronometer is run down, of course, and so I have no means of ascertaining our longitude. I can find out our latitude, of course, but I can

only give a guess at our longitude. I know what it was just before the squall struck us, as I had just worked out the ship's position at that time, and I remember the figures. I know that this island at that time lay about five or six miles on our lee, or to the east of us. So if I find that the chronometer will run, I shall subtract five miles from the longitude we then were in, take a time observation here, and work out the Greenwich time from those data. The result will be inaccurate, of course, but it will be better than mere dead reckoning if we ever find ourselves afloat again. I think I can reduce the factor of error to less than ten minutes, and with that approximation we can manage to find our way to a port, that is to say, if we succeed in getting the *Sairey Ann* into sailing condition again. Everything depends upon that, and one other condition."

"What is the other condition?" asked Billy.

"Why, that we recover the compass and find it in working order."

"That's so, of course," said Tibe, with a note of apprehension in his voice. "Of course, we could never find our way anywhere without a compass."

"Oh, yes, we could," said Max. "In a clumsy and uncertain way, I could manage to find port

without a compass, if only I can get our reckoning right or tolerably near right."

"How could you know in what direction you were sailing?"

"By the sun and stars," answered Max. "It would be a clumsy groping, as I said before, but by close attention and frequent observations, day and night, I would undertake to find my way. Still we shall need the compass badly, and our next task is to get it out if we can. I only hope it is uninjured."

Having rested by this time, the boys set to work upon the compass. As its support was exactly over the keel, or on the middle line of the ship's width, it was still well out of water. After a search in the little cabin a few tools were recovered by diving, and with the aid of these after nearly two hours' work, the box that held the compass was detached from the deck and lowered, at the end of a vine, to the raft. In his eagerness and haste to ascertain the condition of this supremely important implement of navigation, Max let himself drop to the raft, without waiting to climb down the ladder. Setting the compass box upright, he inspected it closely, turning it about to right and left, tipping it first in one direction and then in another, to see if the card swung freely and maintained its horizontal posi-

tion under all changes of angle on the part of the box. Finally, and gleefully, he exclaimed:

"It is all right, boys! The needle card swings with perfect freedom and the gimbals work as well as they ever did! Now if we only had a boat of any kind, we could go to civilization whenever we pleased."

"Well, we'll have a boat before long," said Tibe confidently. "For if we can't get the *Sairey Ann* into shape again—as we probably can—we can beach her, break her up, get out all our tools, and build a new boat out of her fragments, with the aid of that lumber pile down the shore. I'm quite mechanic enough to manage that."

"I believe you are, Tibe," said Max, "but I do not think we'll have to resort to boat building. I'm satisfied now that we shall get the *Sairey Ann* on her keel again. But in any case, now that we can get at tools, we shall have some sort of boat to sail away in. It is only a question of time. Yet at first it really did seem as though only a miracle could ever enable us to get off this island. We must go ashore now. George is beckoning us to dinner."

CHAPTER XXIX

The Beaching of the Sairey Ann

DURING the little resting time after dinner, —for Max wisely insisted upon that rest, always—the young commander took an observation for time, and set his chronometer.

"Now we shall know what time it is," he said. "I've set the chronometer by our local sun time. To-morrow I'll work out the Greenwich time in the way I explained to you and while the result will not be accurate, because my data are not exact, it will serve us fairly well whenever we set sail."

"That's right, Max," said Billy. "A week ago you would have said '*if* we ever set sail,' now you say 'whenever we set sail.' It's very much better."

At that moment George Smith took out his watch, and carefully set it by the chronometer.

"What are you doing, George?" asked Max.

"Setting my watch, that's all," answered the boy.

"But surely your watch won't run."

"Why not? I've wound it up," said the boy in surprise.

"But didn't the salt water ruin it? It fatally disagreed with my watch and Tibe's and Billy's."

"It couldn't get at mine," said George. "This is one of the very best watches made; it is guaranteed not to vary more than ten seconds in any one month, and the case is worthy of the movement. It is not only water tight but absolutely air tight. Unfortunately the watch ran down while we were in the water."

Max examined the timepiece admiringly. Its case was of plain gold, without ornamentation of any kind, but very thick and stout, made so in order that it might not bend and so lose the air-tight perfection of its fit.

"I selected that case myself," said George, "when I went soldiering. I knew I should be subject to all sorts of exposure, and I wanted a case that was completely damp proof. It cost nearly twice what an ordinary gold case would have cost, but under the circumstances it was well worth the difference."

"I should say it was," said Max; "and if I am ever able I am going to have a watch of precisely the same kind. A watch is like a friend; if you can't depend upon it with absolute confi-

dence it is not worth having. Now, boys, we must get to work."

The provisions and nautical instruments had been landed from the raft. Such tools as had been recovered, were left on it for use as needed. To these the boys added a large collection of big and little vines, after which, laying off their clothing, they again pushed the raft out to the wreck.

"First of all," said Max, "make one of the longest of the vines fast to a check post, Billy. You, Tibe, take the end of it and swim ashore. Make it fast to a tree and then come back."

On Tibe's return, Max directed Billy to cast off the ship end of the anchor line, and hand it down to the raft. Then attaching one of the boards to it he cast that overboard.

"What are you doing that for, Max?" asked Billy.

"I'm buoying the anchor line, so that we can get at it whenever we wish."

"But why not haul in the anchor?"

"Because we can't do that from here. The anchor fluke is buried in the sand, otherwise it wouldn't have held the *Sairey Ann*. We can't pull on it half as hard as the ship has been doing and yet she has not moved it. Our only way to raise it is to pull our raft up to it, so that the line will be perpendicular. If you'll think of the shape

of an anchor, you'll readily see that a perpendicular pull will free the fluke of its hold in the sand, and after that we shall have nothing to do but lift it. We will not bother with that now. We must get the ship ashore on this flood tide, and we'll need all the time there is for that. Come. We'll go ashore now."

When they landed, all three seized the vine that Tibe had carried to land, and by hard pulling they soon had the ship in motion towards the beach. The incoming tide helped them in this, and slowly they drew the ship ashore at the point previously selected because of the level and otherwise favorable character of the bottom.

When the boat gently grounded, Max seized a little hand-ax that Billy had recovered from the wreck and set off into the woods with it, bidding the others follow him. There he cut a number of stout sticks of varying lengths, which the boys carried to the landing place as fast as he got them ready.

" What's your plan, Max? " queried Billy when they returned to the wreck.

" Why, we must shore her up on both sides, to keep her in position when the tide recedes, leaving her pretty nearly high and dry. You see when she loses the support of the water, she will be disposed to turn over one way or the other. If

she should turn over on her bottom, she would break her centre-board into kindling wood, and become practically useless for sailing. If she should turn the other way, she'd be bottom up and we never could right her again. So we must shore up both sides of her before the tide begins to ebb."

George Smith who sat on the beach watching the work, offered several suggestions that facilitated it greatly. Just as the boys finished putting the supporting sticks in place, he said:

"Even that may not hold her, Max, particularly if it should come on to blow."

"Yes," answered Max, "and that is what I'm afraid of. But I don't see how we can make her more secure."

"I think I do," answered George.

"Out with your suggestion then," said Max, eagerly. "I'm badly in need of better brains than my own in this emergency."

"Why not fasten a number of vines to the upper bulwarks," said George, "and carry them to trees on each side—just like guy ropes or the stays of a mast?"

Max instantly saw the force of the suggestion and acted upon it, wondering all the while why he had not himself thought of a plan at once so simple, so easy of execution and so entirely effect-

ive. When the guy vines were in place it was obvious that the ship could not possibly turn in either direction.

"Now the next thing," said Max, "is to unstep the mast and free the ship of her rigging. Fortunately the spars are not broken, I think."

"The main boom is," said Tibe. "The break didn't show in the water, but it is plainly visible now that the tide is running out."

It was true enough as Max discovered on investigation. The boom was broken almost in the middle, but the pieces still held together so that the stick had seemed sound while it floated.

"We can make a new boom, of course," said Max with a tone of melancholy in his voice. "But it will require three or four days of hard work to make and fit it. It will mean three or four days' longer stay on the island than would otherwise be necessary."

"Well, we're fairly comfortable here," said George, "now that we know we shall be able to get away in the end."

"Yes," added Billy, "and you know it is customary to allow three days' grace in all business transactions."

"I wonder," said Max, "what they will think has become of us—the War Department people in Richmond, I mean. With fairly good luck we

ought to have been at Nassau a week ago, and as it is we shall not get there for two or three weeks to come. As one blockade runner after another runs into Wilmington or Charleston, bringing no news of us, they will settle down into the firm belief that we've had to blow ourselves up, and will terribly regret that they ever entrusted the bale marked Circle X to our care. They won't care so much for us personally. We're only pawns on a chess board."

"There are always compensations," Billy broke in. "The sorrier they are over our failure, the more they will rejoice when at last they learn of our success."

"Yes," said Tibe, "for we are going to succeed very certainly now. It can't be more than two days' sail from here to Nassau, can it?"

"It is about that," Max answered. "But we aren't ready to sail yet, and shall not be for many, many days to come."

"Oh, that is only the time element," said Tibe. "The main thing to think of now is that we shall ultimately reach Nassau, deliver the bale marked Circle X, get a first rate dinner, put on some new clothes, and go back to Charleston, where you, Max, will receive the plaudits you have so well won, while Billy and I make our mountaineer battery men stretch their eyes over the wonderful

stories of romantic adventure we shall have to tell. Oh, the whole thing is glorious!"

"I'm glad you look at it in that way," said Max. "Now let us get to work, so as to hasten the time of your day-dream's fulfilment. Get the other vine ladder up, so that we may have easy access to the ship. Then release all the stays that hold the mast in place."

When that was done, Max set to work with the aid of his comrades, to free the mast of the sail —and bringing that ashore, they spread it out to dry. A few small barnacles had attached themselves to the canvas but it was unhurt. By the time that this work was completed the sun was going down with night to fall almost immediately afterwards. The boys resumed their clothing, replenished the supply of water in the turtle shell, brought some fresh oysters, and gathered a further store of brushwood. This task was easy, now that there was a keen edged hand-ax with which to do it. They were able not only to get a supply of wood within a much briefer time than before, but they could cut larger wood which lasted longer in the fire.

While the others were thus engaged George was preparing supper. When they returned with their last load of wood, they found such a meal awaiting them as they had not tasted since the

beginning of their voyage. The marsh hens were broiled on the coals; there was a pan full of oysters fried with slices of bacon; there was ship biscuit for bread, and finally George had brewed a pot of strong coffee in the big kettle which had been brought ashore from the wreck. They had secured no tin cups as yet, but the big oyster shells served very well for coffee drinking purposes, and four happier young fellows never sat down to a good meal with lustier appetites.

The day had been excessively warm, but the sky was clear, and a strong sea breeze set in with the going down of the sun. Indeed all breezes were sea breezes on that little strip of island, which was not half a mile in width, from its eastern to its western shore.

Thoroughly comfortable, and full of confidence in the ultimate success of their expedition, the boys sat in the light of the gibbous moon and talked for hours before going to sleep.

CHAPTER XXX

Under a Southern Moon

IT was Tibe who set the talk going. He had broken a great block of oysters off the bank and brought it to camp. He was now lazily breaking the oysters apart with the butt of the hand-ax, when suddenly he asked Billy, who knew more of natural history than any other member of the party, a question which he had often asked himself.

"Why do the oysters stick their shells together in this fashion, till they build great banks of themselves? And how do they manage to do it, Billy?"

"It is simple enough," said Billy. "In the spawning season each oyster gives off myriads of little milky particles, each particle being in fact a baby oyster. These float in the water, and the fish and shrimps and the like, devour millions of them. But the moment an infant oyster comes in contact with anything solid, it attaches itself thereto, and proceeds to build a shell of its own round about its otherwise defenceless self. It may and often does attach itself to its mother's shell

or to any other shell that it may happen to encounter; and when a million or so young oysters attach themselves in this way to a few old oysters, it doesn't take them long to grow up and make a great mass or bank of themselves. Then when they spawn in their turn their own shells offer the most convenient objects for their young to form an attachment to, or for or with—use any preposition you prefer. These great aggregations of oyster shells are so arranged that the water flows freely through the spaces between them, so that generally speaking all the oysters have a chance to get food from the sea water. Now and then, however, an oyster or even a considerable group of oysters, gets itself so closely shut in that the water cannot reach it. In that case the oysters thus cut off from food, simply starve to death. There! you've got two or three empty shells in your hand now, the former tenants of which perished in that way. Sometimes an oyster bank grows so large that the water, as it flows in, is robbed of all its food supply by the more favorably located outer oysters, and in that case also the oysters which first settled there, die for want of food. You know how it is down at our oyster bank. There are no live oysters in toward the shore—only empty shells, or shells full of mud."

"But how does an oyster eat?" asked Tibe.

"Simply by opening its shell and letting sea water flow into it. The water is full of the materials that serve as food for oysters. When the shell is full of water the oyster shuts it up, water tight, and proceeds to absorb the food stuff into his pulpy body. You have heard the clicking of the opening and shutting shells at Bluffton many a time."

"Oh, yes. I remember noticing that. But I never knew what it meant. It usually occurs when the tide is high or is just going out."

"Yes. You see," said Billy, "at high tide, and especially when there is a surf on, much of the floating spawn attaches itself to the top of the oyster bank, and so the bank grows higher and higher until the top of it is completely out of water except at high tide, while the bottom of it is always under water. The oysters between get more or less water according to their relative position in the bank. As the tide comes in each opens its shell till it fills, and then shuts it with a snap. That is what makes the clicking sound."

"But, Billy," said George Smith, "there is one thing I never did understand. When the baby oyster forms its shell the shell is just big enough to hold it. Now the shell cannot stretch, of course, and yet as the oyster grows the shell grows

too, and the cavity within expands, keeping itself always just big enough to hold its oyster tenant. I cannot imagine how the thing is done."

Billy picked up two or three empty shells and examined them. Presently he selected one that suited his purpose, and said:

"Look at this shell, George. You see it has little ridges running around its edge. Each ridge represents an addition which the oyster made to his house as he needed more and more room. In the main he enlarges his dwelling by extending its edges in that way."

"Where does he get his building materials?" asked Tibe, who had become much interested.

"Out of the sea water," answered Billy. "The shell is mostly a kind of lime, which the sea water carries in solution in great abundance. The polished surface inside the shell, is a glaze made of nacre, a substance which all shell fish secrete from their bodies, to line their dwelling with, by way of protecting themselves from irritation. If a bit of sand gets in or if the smooth surface is injured by a blow, the oyster or mussel immediately secretes nacre freely at the point of irritation. That is the way in which pearls are produced. Any oyster may produce a pearl now and then, but the so called 'pearl oysters' seem to be peculiarly endowed with the capacity to secrete

nacre, and so they furnish most of the fine pearls, though now and then a valuable pearl is found in the ordinary oyster of our Atlantic coasts. Some have been found that were worth a hundred dollars apiece, in gold. By the way there is a curious true story about pearls, which puzzled the scientific people for a long time. There is a little river in Scotland that is full of a pearl-bearing species of mussels. For a long time the people near a certain ford used to support themselves by pearl fishing. This at least was their main dependence for a living. There was an old prophecy, to the effect that if ever a bridge should be built at that point on the river, the mussels would cease to bear pearls. Finally a bridge was built, and the prophecy was fulfilled. The river still had an abundance of mussels in it, but they yielded no more pearls. The fact brought sore calamity upon a worthy people, robbing them of their principal means of livelihood. Naturally it made talk, and among the ignorant and credulous pearl fishers, the belief was confident that a curse had come upon them for disregarding a prophecy in building the bridge. Finally scientific men began investigating the matter. At first they could find no explanation. But after a while one of them discovered the secret. The mussels secrete the nacre that makes pearls, only when they are

bruised, or their shells are broken. They do it as a matter of self protection. Before the bridge was built, the peasant folk, who lived at the mountain's base, used to drive their cattle across the stream at the ford, to and from the pasture lands on the other side. Of course the hoofs of the cattle injured many of the mussels, and set them to producing pearls. When the bridge was built the cattle no longer crossed through the ford and so the stream ceased to yield pearls."

"That's a singularly interesting story, Billy. And you tell a story well."

"Yes," said Tibe. "But I'm not satisfied. George asked a question a while ago and you have answered only half of it. I'm hungry for the answer to the other half."

"What was it, Tibe?" asked Billy. "I'll answer the other half if I can."

"Why, he asked how the inside of an oyster shell grows so as to accommodate the oyster's increasing size. I remember that my trousers never would accommodate me in that way during the formative period of Tiberius Gracchus Smith. I'm curious to know how the oyster manages the matter. You've told us how he builds additions to the edge of his house but you haven't told us how he stretches the room inside."

"He does that," said Billy, "by absorbing the

materials of the shell next to him, and using them again in building out the edges of his shell."

"What a sagacious creature the oyster must be!" said Tibe opening one of the mollusks. "And yet his countenance doesn't sparkle with intelligence, as I gaze at him on the half shell. Perhaps that is because he never travels and therefore knows little of the world."

"He is adapted to his conditions and environment," said Billy. "Therefore he gets on in life. The same thing is true of all living things, animal or vegetable, except men. Did it ever occur to you that all the troubles in life, or most of them at any rate, are caused simply by men's refusal or incapacity to reconcile themselves to the conditions in which they are placed?"

"I remember," said George, "that Horace Greeley once said that every trouble in this world was due to some man's inability to sit still in a chair. I suppose it is something like that that you mean."

"Yes—it is something like that. Man is by nature discontented with things as they are, and is always wishing to have them some other way. When he gets them into the shape he desires, he is still discontented and conceives new ideals. Give an animal or plant plenty of food and the other conditions necessary to its healthful living and it

is perfectly satisfied; but not so with man. The more he has, the more he wants, and he spends his life trying to better his condition. Singularly enough, he grows more and more anxious for improvement, as his condition grows better. It is out of that eternal discontent that wars and troubles of every kind arise."

"And yet," said Max, "that very discontent is, and has always been the chief cause of the advance of mankind, in intelligence, in civilization and in every other way, physical, mental and moral. It is that which raises man far above all the other living creatures. If a pig's sty becomes foul, the pig rests perfectly content with that condition. He accepts it just as he accepts sunshine and air and rain, as a necessary part of his environment. If a man finds his premises uncomfortably or unwholesomely dirty, he works hard to clean them. He goes further. He seeks to prevent a recurrence of such conditions, by making drains, building sewers and in a thousand other ways. If a man is cold he wraps himself in skins or clothing and builds a fire. No animal does that. If a river lies in a man's way he builds a boat. And as one fault after another in his boat is revealed to him he improves in the art of boat building. In order to communicate with men at a distance, man invented a written alphabet and

devised materials for writing purposes. When he strongly felt the need of communicating his thought quickly over long distances, he invented the telegraph. When he wanted more power than horses could furnish, he made a steam engine, and he has been improving it ever since. It is in the same way with small things and great. Men put pockets in their clothes. They make combs with which to rid their hair of tangles. They make tools with which the better to accomplish their desires, and whenever any kind of work is slow and tedious and otherwise difficult, men set their wits at work to devise some ingenious machine that will do it for them. From caves and bush shelters to elaborately contrived dwellings, men have steadily advanced under spur of their discontent at every step with existing conditions. No animal does anything of the kind. Generation after generation the birds build their nests in the same way that their ancestors did, and so it is with all the other animals. Those of them that live now in better conditions than their forefathers did, have been provided with those conditions by men. No horse ever built a stall for himself, or provided himself with a trough or hay rack."

"That is all true," said Billy. "And yet animals and plants have greatly improved, even with-

out men's aid, as all nature and the history of nature written in the rocks, clearly show. I have at home a copy of a wonderful book, by Charles Darwin, which shows how this has been done. It is called 'The Origin of Species,' and was published only a year or two before the war."

"What is its fundamental idea, Billy?" asked Max.

"Why, that the life of plants and animals is a perpetual and very fierce struggle for existence, in which millions perish where one survives. Every grass plant, for example, produces a hundred or more seeds each year. If each seed produced a new plant, and that plant survived, it is easy to see that in the course of a very few years the whole earth would be covered with grass. And so with animals. But each plant and each animal must fight for the privilege of living. Each meets difficulty from a scant food supply, from varying climates, from other plants and animals that are struggling to live and from a thousand other sources. Each is exposed to enemies, and only the strongest, or those that are best placed by accidental circumstances survive. Then there are other laws of nature involved. Every animal and plant has a strong tendency to transmit its own qualities and peculiarities to its descendants. We know that all kinds of dogs,

for example, came from a common stock. Yet no man in his senses would try to make a bull dog do the work of a setter. That is because the bull dog's ancestors have not been trained through generations to that kind of work, as the setter's ancestors have been. Now whenever any animal or plant happens to develop a quality or an organ which helps it to secure food, or to overcome its enemies, or to escape from their pursuit, that particular animal or plant has an advantage in the struggle for existence. It is more likely than its fellows to survive and propagate its species. It does so under a strong tendency to transmit its own advantageous peculiarity to its successors, until after a while the whole species comes to have that helpful peculiarity by inheritance—those that did not inherit it having succumbed in the struggle for existence. Thus, in the Arctic regions, where snow is eternal, there are none but white birds. The dark ones having been easily seen and devoured by their enemies."

"That is extremely interesting," said Max. "And of course man too has his struggle for existence. But if that were all, man would never have reached his present stage of advancement. He would have stopped and rested content, just as animals do, when they find life easy. Man has made a new and a fiercer struggle for himself, by

reason of his discontent, his never satisfied ambition to make things better and better for himself."

"Yes," said George reflectively, "and there seems to me to be another important difference. When an animal or plant gains any advantage, it uses it against its fellows to their detriment and shares it only with its own descendants, while if a man makes an improvement of any kind, all other men are free to adopt it for their own advantage."

"That is true," drawled Tibe, sleepily. "For example when a man found out how to make a watch that would tell him what time it was, and especially when to go to bed, other men secured watches of a like usefulness. George has a particularly good specimen as I understand it. I move that he be requested to report to this company of speculative philosophers, what hour of the night it is."

"It is a quarter past eleven," said the boy in blue, consulting his watch.

CHAPTER XXXI

A Disturbed Night and a Busy Day

MAX and Tibe slept within the hut that night. Billy Boker and George Smith preferred the open air and the moonlight. Late in the night George grew restless in his sleep, uttering a low moan of pain now and then. Presently Billy woke, and began observing his comrade closely. After a while he touched George, and asked in a sympathetic voice:

"What is it that troubles you, old fellow?"

Waking, George answered, "Oh, nothing much. It is only that my game leg is bothering me a bit."

"It must be bothering you a good deal more than a bit," said Billy, "or you wouldn't be conscious of it in your sleep. You've been moaning terribly. Now I'm going to take a look at the offending and offended member."

With that he threw some brush upon the half dead fire and created a blaze. After examining the wound carefully, and feeling of the skin round about it, he asked:

"How long has this been coming on, George? It certainly didn't all come on tonight."

"No," answered the boy, "it has been hurting me a good deal for two days now, though not so badly as tonight. I haven't said anything about it, because you fellows had troubles enough of your own. That's why I have been sleeping out of doors. I caught myself groaning in my sleep, and I didn't want to disturb you others."

"George Smith," said Billy, with slow deliberation, "will you permit me to make the purely personal remark that of all the men I have ever known you are by odds the most generously considerate one I ever met? Permit me to add, however, that you are a precious idiot. You ought to have told me of this when it first began, so that I might do what I could for you. Your wound is very angry, and the leg, above and below it, is bady swollen and inflamed. It is nearly as hard as a stick of wood. If you had told me at the beginning, we wouldn't have let you stir about so much. That has made it worse and worse, until now it is in a really dangerous condition. I'm going to do what I can for you, with the meagre means at hand, and I'm going to tie you down if you don't lie still and give yourself a chance."

The fact that hurtful inflammation in a wound

is caused by microscopic germs, had not been discovered at the time the events of this story occurred; but without quite understanding why, the doctors had learned by experience that there is nothing so good for a wound as to keep it clean. So Billy spent quite half an hour in cleansing and bathing his comrade's hurt. In the meantime the other boys had been wakened by the talking, and had joined their companions by the fire, anxious to assist in any way that might be possible.

"Go to the bale marked Circle X, one of you," said Billy presently, "and pull out a big wad of clean cotton."

When Tibe brought the cotton, Billy examined it carefully, and proceeded to wash it thoroughly. Then, wringing it out, he held it, on the point of a stick, in the heat of the fire until it was completely dry again. He picked it to pieces, making a light, fluffy lint of it. Some of this he pressed gently into the wound. The rest of it, he laid upon the surface and bound it there with thread-like bits of vine.

"We'll renew that dressing twice a day," he said when all was done. "Now pick out the spot where you want to lie for the present, for I'm going to put you on your back and string up that leg enough to keep some of the superfluous blood

out of it. I told you I would tie you up, to keep you still."

George selected a smooth place under a tree, and Billy, with a looped vine, gently raised his foot to a height of about six or eight inches from the ground, holding it in that position by fastening the other end of the vine to a limb of the tree.

By this time the sun was up, and the boys set about getting a simple breakfast.

"I say, fellows," called out George from his recumbent position, "do you suppose any of you could find my traps? I'll direct you as carefully as I can, and maybe you'll find some game worth having, in some of them."

Tibe undertook this errand and by the time that the others had breakfast ready, he returned, bringing several edible birds with him. These were quickly dressed and put away in the shade, for the evening meal. The breakfast consisted of fried bacon and oysters, with coffee and ship biscuit. As soon as it was over and the cooking utensils were properly cleansed, the party began work for the day. George had so chosen his place of repose that he could see the work as it went on, and speak to his comrades when he wished. Fortunately, as the day advanced, Billy found that no fever had set in as he had feared that it might;

and the position in which he had placed the wounded leg relieved its pain to a great extent and even caused the swelling and inflammation to subside somewhat. But after a while the loop of vine by which the leg was suspended, began to chafe the boy's ankle, and Billy, discovering the fact, quitted work long enough to gather a great mass of moss and arrange it under the leg for a support, dispensing with the vine altogether. After that George rested easily and comfortably.

The first thing to do that day was to unstep the mast and take it out of the sloop. This was not difficult, inasmuch as the mast was not fastened in any way. It had simply been passed through a hole in the deck—rimmed with metal and exactly the size of the mast—and allowed to drop its lower end into an iron thimble or socket which was fastened to the keel. The removal of the mast so far lightened the deck side of the boat, that but for the props and guy vines, she would have rolled over on the centre-board which stuck out from the keel. That, of course, must not be permitted.

For the benefit of readers who are not familiar with centre-board craft, a brief explanation is necessary.

A centre-board is a sort of fin, made of heavy planks, stoutly held together. There is a slit

made in the boat's keel, just big enough to let the centre-board move up and down through it. Above the slit is a sort of box, of the same width extending to the deck. The centre-board moves up and down in this water tight box, being handled by a small windlass or by a lever on deck. When the boat sits upright in her natural position, the centre-board is easily lowered or raised at will. It is drawn up into the box when the ship is sailing before the wind. It is not needed then, and if left down it would offer a needless obstruction to the boat's passage through the water. But when the boat is sailing on the wind, or with the wind abeam, the centre-board must be let down into the water, to keep the craft from " slipping off " to one side, and thus to compel her to make headway in the desired direction.

Now if the good ship *Sarah Ann* had been floating right side up, the boys would have had no difficulty whatever in drawing the centre-board up into its box. But as she lay on her side, the friction of the centre-board against the side of the slit and box, was so great that after many efforts Max was convinced that he and his comrades could never move it even an inch, by their unaided strength.

" If we only had a block and tackle," he muttered meditatively, " we could do the trick I think.

But all such gear is in the lazaret, and we simply can't get into that."

"I think you can," called George Smith from the shore.

"How, George?"

"Why, you can break in. Now that the tide is nearly at low water, most of the water inside the boat must have run out. Why can't you go inside with the little ax, and break through the thin board walls of the lazaret?"

Max thought for several minutes before replying. He went to the companion way and thrust his head in for a time, studying the situation of affairs in the hold. Finally he said:

"Again we are indebted to you, George, for a most valuable suggestion. Your plan is excellent, but we must take the cargo out before we can get at the walls of the lazaret. Come, fellows, let's get the main hatch open!"

This was not an easy task, for although the hatch was only a stout wooden lid nailed down over a wide hole in the deck, it was very awkward to get at, with the ship in her present position, and the nails employed in fastening it to the deck, were long, thick spikes, now very badly rusted. But with the aid of George's rope ladders, readjusted for the purpose, Max finally managed to get himself and his comrades into a position from

which they could work at the hatch. Hour after hour they toiled, not even stopping for a midday meal, for now that George's leg was again in a threatening condition, they were determined to lose no time in getting away from the island and into some port where the poor fellow could have surgical attention. They used the little ax to start one corner of the hatch, and as soon as they secured a half inch crack at that corner, they went ashore and manufactured a large number of wooden wedges of different sizes. By driving one of these into the little crack, they opened it wider, and caused it to extend itself along the two edges that formed the corner. Then they drove other wedges into the crack farther along the sides, thus little by little starting all the nails. Finally, just as the sun sank into the sea, the great hatch gave way and fell into the shallow water.

The sky was now overcast, with a threat of heavy rain. The quickly on-coming darkness forbade further work that evening. Tibe picked up George in his weary arms, and carried him to the shelter. Billy brought the moss on which the wounded leg had been resting and rearranged it in the hut. While Max and Tibe prepared supper, Billy carefully inspected George's wound, washed it again and put on a new dressing.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Philosophy of Tiberius Gracchus Smith

IT was raining pitilessly when the boys awoke in the morning, and there was that strange chill in the air which rain on an east wind always brings in the usually hot climate of low latitudes. It was a distinctly depressing, discouraging day that lay before the young castaways, but they were too full of that energy which hope inspires, to suffer depression or discouragement.

Billy dressed George's wound while the others prepared breakfast. He found the injury only a trifle improved since the morning before, but he and his patient consoled themselves with the thought that at any rate it had not grown worse, "as it easily might have done," George said, "and as it very certainly would have done without your kindly care, Billy. As long as I live I shall never find better friends than you fellows have been to me."

"And as long as we live," responded Billy, "we shall never find any one more worthy of our friendship than you are."

After breakfast, the boys removed their torn and tattered garments, and bestowing them within the shelter, made an early beginning of their day's work. George was not permitted to leave the shelter on this day of pouring, drenching rain, but at his request Billy so arranged his resting place that he had the wreck in full view, and could interest himself by watching the progress of the work.

"I can't talk to you from here, Billy," the boy said with the pleasant smile which even severe pain could not banish from his face; "but if I see anything going wrong, or if I fancy myself wiser than the rest of you, I'll 'holler,' and some of you can come to me for advice and instruction."

"What a brave, splendid fellow George Smith is!" said Billy to his companions as they went to the scene of their work.

"Yes," said Tibe, "and what a pity it is that when we go back to Charleston, we shall have to shoot at him!"

"I don't much count upon that," said Billy. "If I'm not mistaken it will be a very long time before he is able to report for duty, and the war may be over before that time. It must come to an end some time, you know."

"Yes, certainly," said Max, who had not be-

fore spoken. "But we are not in South Carolina just now and not likely to be for a long time yet. It will be time enough to cross the bridge when we come to it. Our present business is to get that cotton out of the sloop's hold."

Max first of all set to work to make an inclined plane of boards and timbers, from the now open mouth of the hatchway, to the shallow water by the shore. That done, he climbed up the ladder, and made a careful inspection of the cargo, in pursuance of his rule always to master the conditions of a problem before undertaking to solve it. He found that while all the cotton bales had shifted as far to port as they could their mass was so great that some of them still lay above the lower edge of the open hatchway. Two others were resting upon what had been the starboard side—now the upper side—of the centre-board case.

All these were got out with comparative ease, but the six bales that lay on the port side, which was now the lower side of the ship as she lay on her beam ends, offered a much more difficult problem. They were closely jammed together, and of course they lay below the lower edge of the hatchway opening. They must be lifted bodily up to that opening, and as they had weighed about five hundred pounds apiece when dry, and now in

their water soaked condition, weighed nearly twice as much, it would be futile foolishness for three young men, stalwart as they were, to attempt the task without the aid of some mechanical contrivance.

Billy came to the rescue. "I'm diminutive enough," he said, "to crawl through that little passageway and get at the lazaret. There are advantages even in being small sometimes. Shall I do it, Max?"

"Yes, by all means, if you can."

"Well, I can. Hand me the little ax, Tibe."

Armed with that instrument, Billy wriggled his way through the hole and, as he expressed it, "committed a daylight burglary." That is to say he broke the side planking of the lazaret, and got at its contents. But how to get them out for use, was a puzzle. Not only was it impossible for him to turn around in the narrow channel through which he had crawled, but as there was not room enough for him to bend his knees, he could not even retreat, by any muscular force of his own. But Billy was always resourceful. He felt about in the lazaret until he secured the largest set of blocks and tackle there was on board. Then he called to his companions to pull him out by the heels, which they did, he bringing the ax in one hand and the blocks and tackle in the other.

His escape from suffocation had been so narrow that Max would not permit him to crawl into the hole again, as he wanted to do, in order to bring out the remaining stores from the lazaret.

"We'll remove all the cargo first," said the young commander. "Then we can get at the lazaret without difficulty. The block and tackle rig is quite all that we need for the present."

Hitching the hook of the tackle to the starboard gunwale, and the other end to a cotton bale, the boys were easily able to draw it up and out of the hatchway, whence they lowered it to the shore. Repeating this operation, they succeeded, by a little after noon, in getting out all the cotton, leaving the hold of their ship completely empty. They rolled the cotton bales well up on the shore where they would dry in the sun, when the rain should cease. Then they went into the empty hold of the ship, enlarged the opening Billy had made in the side of the lazaret, and removed the entire contents of that nautical storehouse, which Tibe insisted upon calling the refrigerator. They now had an abundance of tools, and a good supply of oakum.

"We'll need both the tools and the oakum," said Max meditatively, "and we'll need them very badly."

"Why, Max?"

"Because the *Sairey Ann* has suffered a good deal more damage than we thought," he said.

"Why do you think so? I don't see any marks of serious damage," said Billy.

"We've just had the flood of a heavy spring tide," explained Max, "and it is now nearly low water. It goes much lower, on a spring tide than on ordinary tides, as I explained to you some time ago. It has left our ship very nearly high and dry, and if you'll take a peep inside, you'll see that the water has run out of her hold almost as fast as it has gone down outside. That means a very big leak somewhere or a great many small leaks, one or the other. We shall have to repair them as soon as we get the ship on her keel again. As they are underneath, on her port side we cannot get at them while she remains in her present position. Come now, we must get something to eat. For hurried as we are, to finish our work, we must keep up our strength. We'll have special need for strength this afternoon."

"What's the next thing on the programme, Max?" asked Tibe. "You see I like to know beforehand, so that I may enjoy thinking about it. You know it is a universally accepted truism that 'there is more joy in anticipation than in realization.'"

"You are incorrigible, Tibe," said Max. "But

if you think you'll rejoice in the prospect, I'll tell you that our next task is to get that big lumbering centre-board back into its case. You had better get all the pleasure you can out of the prospect, for I do assure you there will be precious little in the work itself."

"Oh, I don't know," Tibe replied. "I like hard work. I like to struggle with difficulties and overcome them, thus demonstrating human mastery over inanimate things. And then just think how glad we shall all be, when we get the thing done! I tell you there's pleasure to be got out of almost everything, if you look at it in the right way."

"That is an optimistic philosophy," said Billy, "which it is well to cultivate. But it is an 'acquired taste.'"

"No, it isn't," protested Tibe. "All little children have it. It is born in us, and we lose it by fretting and fearing. For my part, I mean to hold on to it. Now most people would think it a terrible calamity to be cast away on an uninhabited island to which ships never come, and in a way that is true! But I for one am managing to get a good deal of fun out of it. Besides I am learning a good deal, and having an experience which I shall look back to with pleasure all my life."

CHAPTER XXXIII

Tibe's Triumph

AFTER dinner Max made preparations for drawing in the centre-board. He attached the five-pulleyed block and tackle to the chains, and ordered Tibe to make fast the other end of the rig, to a stout tree. Tibe hesitated, and presently said:

"Pardon me, Max, but I don't think you can do it in that way, and worse still I think it will be dangerous even to try."

"Why, Tibe? And what other way is there? You know I have great respect for your mechanical ability. So out with your thought."

"Well, you see," said Tibe, "while the centre-board is completely out, and the ship lying on her side, the whole weight of the heavy structure, plus an enormous leverage, is bearing upon the little six-inch part of the board that remains in the slot. It presses the under side down upon one edge of the opening, and the upper, innerside upwards, against the upper side of the casing, both with enormous force. With things in that posi-

tion, it is simply impossible, in my judgment, to pull the centre-board into its case. But a five-pulleyed block and tackle exerts a very great power. One man at the ' fall ' rope of it, can lift a heavy iron safe. I've seen that done. Now if you put such a pull as that upon the chains when the centre-board is too tightly wedged to move, as I am convinced that it is, you'll break something —the lever itself or worse still the chains that connect it with the centre-board. If that should happen, there would be an end of all hope. You could not get at the break to repair it."

Max thoughtfully examined the state of affairs, and after a time he said:

" I'm afraid you are right, Tibe. But I don't see what else is to be done."

" Well, I do," said Tibe. " We must support the centre-board, so as to take its weight and its leverage off, and relieve the pinch at the edge of the case. Then we shall have only the friction of the lower side of the case as the board is drawn in, to overcome. The block and tackle will easily overcome that."

" ' The tools to him who can use them,' " said Max, quoting the adage. " You take charge of this job, Tibe. You are the fittest one to manage it, and so I place it in your hands without reserve. Give your orders, and Billy and I will obey them."

"Very well," said Tibe. "'Let not him boast himself who putteth on his armor, but rather him who putteth it off.' That, as I understand it means 'don't holler till you're out of the woods,' and so I won't. But I think I foresee clearly that before tomorrow's sun shall reach the meridian we'll have the centre-board snugly and safely housed where a well behaved centre-board should be. Go into the woods both of you, and cut two stiff sticks of perfectly straight timber, about seven feet long, or a little less, and about six inches in diameter. Strip the bark off them and bring them here."

There were three large axes among the things that had been got out of the lazaret, so that all three boys could chop at the same time. While the others were fulfilling his instructions, Tibe also went into the woods and cut six stout sticks, each about seven or eight feet in length, but he did not strip off their bark, or take any particular pains to see that they were smooth.

When all the timbers were brought to the shore, Tibe cut three notches in each of the barked sticks, one at each end and one in the middle. Then he beveled one end of each of the other sticks, so that they might fit into the notches thus made. Taking some of the boards from the raft, he next

built a little platform a foot or two above the water, and immediately under the protruding centre-board. This was merely for him and his comrades to stand upon, so as easily to reach the centre-board.

That done, Tibe directed the others to bring one of the peeled sticks and place it under the centre-board, from the ship's bottom outwards, with its notched side down. While they held it in this position, Tibe set up three of the rougher sticks under it, fitting their beveled ends into the notches. He had purposely made these supporting posts a trifle too long, so that they slanted a little when in place. He put the other peeled stick in position in the same way, under the other end of the centre-board and supported it with posts in like manner.

Then he called his comrades from the platform, and with their assistance, he little by little drove the lower ends of the supporting sticks toward the ship till they stood nearly straight. This raised the barked sticks and the centre-board which rested upon them, until it no longer pinched in its slot.

"There," shouted Tibe in glee, "we've got that centre-board on slick runners, with all its weight supported. Now hitch the block and tackle to it

and pull it in slowly. I'll stay here and watch for accidents. If I call out, you must instantly stop pulling."

Every reader who has observed a five-pulleyed block and tackle at work, knows that it moves very slowly. The hauling in of many feet of the fall rope, moves the grappling hook not more than a few inches. But, at any rate, when the boys began to pull, the centre-board began to move, and slowly, inch by inch, it slid into its case. Tibe nimbly climbed one of the supporting sticks, and placed himself astride one of the runners. He slid himself along as fast as the centre-board moved, carefully observing it, to make instant discovery of any obstruction. After a little time the boys working the block and tackle found their task growing harder with every pull.

"That means," said Max, "that as the centre-board slips into its slot, it rubs against the under side of it. The friction is much greater than when the thing was running only on two round, smooth sticks with no bark on them."

After a time the friction became so great, indeed, that the two boys could scarcely move the centre-board at all. Tibe, discovering this from the slow motion and the frequent pauses, and feeling secure against accidents and obstructions now that the board was more than half inside the

case, let himself down from his perch and went to the assistance of his comrades. With his great strength added to theirs, the centre-board moved again. After several minutes more of pulling, the tackle came to a complete stop, and could not be moved an inch further.

"That means," said Tibe, abandoning his hold on the fall rope, and dancing for joy, "that means that the job is done!"

Running around to the other side of the ship, the boys saw that Tibe was right. The centre-board was completely housed, and the *Sairey Ann's* keel was free of all obstruction.

It was now nearly nightfall, and when the boys had cleared away Tibe's timber structure, their day's work—the hardest they had yet experienced—was done. They were very weary, but a hearty supper, with plenty of coffee, quickly relieved that, and the joy of their success with this, their most important as well as most difficult task, rendered them rather indifferent to sleep.

"How did you come to think of all that, Tibe?" asked Billy.

"Oh, I don't know. I simply saw that we could never draw the centre-board in unless we supported it, and it was a very simple thing to support it. Anybody could have done that."

"Yes," said Max. "And anybody could stand

an egg on its end after Columbus showed how to do it. I think it is safe to say that all good mechanical devices are perfectly simple. If they were not simple they would not be good. It is safe to say, too, that all scientific, and all mechanical achievements of value, are accomplished just as Tibe did this thing—by first finding out what the difficulty is and then using the simplest and most obvious means of overcoming it. The trouble with most of us is that we do not clearly see what the difficulties are, and when we do, we're dull at discovering the remedy, however simple and obvious it may be. Genius, in science and mechanics, is mainly quickness of perception. Tibe has that quality in much larger measure than any of the rest of us, except George perhaps—"

"It runs in the Smith family," broke in Tibe. "Think of the celebrated Captain John Smith. His inventive genius was so great that many people think he actually invented most of the marvelous adventures that befell him."

Max and the others laughed, but Max was earnestly thinking. Presently he said:

"Well, I am going to make use of the Smith family's genius. I'm going to put you, Tibe, from this time forth in charge of all our mechanical work."

"Oh, don't!" said Tibe. "Remember how I

got the *Sairey Ann* into Central Asia, and beware of trusting me."

"That was simply an error, due to inexperience," said Max. "Of course I shall remain in command, and especially I will direct everything that relates to navigation. But I shall set you to tell us how to solve difficult mechanical problems. We must attempt one of them tomorrow."

"What is that?"

"Why, our next job is to get the *Sairey Ann* on her keel without letting her fall and burst herself open. I'll point out the difficulties tomorrow, and give you the benefit of all I know about a ship. You must plan the means of doing what is necessary."

CHAPTER XXXIV

Right Side Up

EARLY the next morning, the boys were at work. At Tibe's suggestion, all three made a careful inspection of the situation without saying anything.

"In that way," Tibe said, "we shall get the benefit of three separate inspections. Then every fellow must say whatever he thinks as to plans, and together we'll work out the best way of proceeding."

"All right," said Max, "but first let me clearly state the problem to be wrought out. It is simply, to get the ship on her keel again, without letting her fall in doing so. A fall of even a foot, or half a foot, with her great weight, would injure her badly, perhaps irreparably."

All three proceeded to the work of inspection. Max and Billy went round and round the boat, wading, and as they supposed, considering every difficulty. Tibe went around her only once, but carefully. After that he cut a slender stick, and, wading along the submerged gunwale, carefully

measured the depth of water at every foot of his progress, from stem to stern. Then he tied a heavy oyster shell to a string and mounting one of the rope ladders, let it swing like a mason's plumb line across the deck. When he had finished, he rejoined his companions, and sitting down on the sand, said to them:

"The deck is not quite perpendicular. As she lies upon the bottom, she leans a little toward the keel—in the direction in which we want her to go."

"Are you sure of that?" cried Billy. "I can't see any inclination in that direction. On the contrary, she seems to me to lean in just the other way."

"That is a fallacy of the eyes," explained Tibe. "I haven't trusted my eyes. I've tested the matter with a plumb line, and gravitation assures me that the starboard edge of the deck up there in the air, leans fully six inches toward the keel. If we were to cut the guy vines and remove the props, she would pretty certainly roll over on her keel. If not, a very small pull would carry her over. Our task is to let her roll over in that way, but to make her do it very slowly and gently."

"Well, we can do that easily," said impatient Billy, "by holding on the guy vines."

"Yes," answered Tibe, "and by the time she

had rolled over by a foot or less, she'd snatch those guy vines out of our fingers and fall with a thump. Do you imagine that we three fellows could hold her enormous weight?"

"Tell us your plan, Tibe," said Max.

"Why, we must support her and check her speed as she rolls over, with a block and tackle. That would be simple enough, if the bottom under her as she lies, were a perfectly regular slope; but it is not. I find by sounding that she rests upon a little hump about amidships. So in rolling over, she is likely to slew around. That would put an end to our control of her and she would fall and burst open like a watermelon, dropped on a rock. We must so arrange our tackle as to control both ends and the middle of her at once. Fortunately we have plenty of rope now. First of all, we'll fasten the smaller block and tackle to her starboard rail amidships, and secure it to a tree on the keel side of her. That is to pull her over with if she refuses to turn of her own accord. Suppose you two get that gear in place, while I make the rest of our tackle ready."

The two boys set to work at once. Tibe, meanwhile, selected three stout ropes each about forty feet long. He attached one of them to the starboard check post astern, another to the starboard check post at the bow, and the third to a stout

iron deck ring amidships on the starboard or upper side of the ship.

Then going ashore again, he brought the free ends of his three ropes together and fastened them securely to a loop of rope, which he had made for the purpose, and into the other side of this loop he fastened the hook of the block and tackle. By this time the others, having finished their task, rejoined him. He directed them to make the farther end of the block and tackle rig fast to a stout tree.

"Now," he explained, "when we draw upon the fall rope, the force of the tackle will pull equally upon the two ends and the middle of the ship at once. She can't slew around by so much as an inch at either end. Now I'll explain just what we've got to do. You two fellows are to hold the fall rope of this tackle, and pay it out very slowly as the ship turns over, away from it. Its only purpose is to regulate the ship's action, and let her fall slowly and steadily. For extra safety, you'd better pass the fall rope loosely once around a tree, so that no lurch can drag it out of your hands. You can let it slip on the tree, as needed. Now be very careful, fellows. Manage this part of the job well and I'll do the rest."

The boys did as he had bidden them, and when they were ready, with the fall rope of the tackle

well in hand, Tibe seized an ax and cut the guy vines on that side of the ship. Then he ran around to the other, or keel side, and hastily knocked away all the supports that had been placed there; stepping clear of danger he called to the others, to let their tackle slacken a trifle.

"I want to see," he said, "if she'll start to roll of her own accord."

But she stood firm.

"All right!" Tibe shouted; "now hold fast, and I'll go to the other tackle and pull her over. As she starts, you fellows must give slack slowly."

Running to the tackle which extended to a tree on the keel side of the boat, he pulled a little on the fall rope, and immediately the ship began turning in that direction. As soon as she had so far turned as to make her weight sufficient, Tibe hurried to the side of his comrades and directed them in paying out line, he in the meantime watching the behavior of the sloop with eager eyes, his muscles tense, his heart thumping and his mind strained with anxiety lest some mishap should mar his work.

No mishap occurred, however, for the simple reason that Tibe had carefully provided for every contingency. Little by little the ship rolled over until she rested upon her keel in the sand, for it was now low water slack.

"There! that will do," Tibe called to his comrades. "Make your fall rope fast to the tree."

With that he ran to the other side of the ship and pulled away at the other tackle gear till it was stretched taut, when he made that, too, fast.

"What is that for, Tibe?" asked Billy.

"To hold her on an even keel while she is aground. In other words to keep her level. If she were afloat she would sit upright in the water, of course, but while she rests on the sand she has an insatiate longing to roll over toward one side or the other. The tackle will prevent that."

Then turning to Max, with mock seriousness, Tibe assumed the attitude of a soldier, gave a stiff military salute, and said:

"Captain Voxetter, I have the honor to report that I have executed my orders, and that the good ship *Sairey Ann* sits securely upon her own bottom, as every tub ought to do."

"Thank you, Tibe!" answered Max, whose seriousness of mood was not at all assumed; "your performance does you very great credit, and I cannot tell you how much we are indebted to you for it. But for your circumspection and foresight, we should probably have made a sad mess of the affair. Now will you two please go to the camp and get dinner ready? I have some

little matters to look to, here. I'll join you within half an hour."

The two went at once to the camp. Max went to the ship as she lay there on the sands, with scarcely more than her keel under water. With his jack knife he tried every seam, and he looked long and anxiously at the upper part of the port side, which had suffered a good deal of damage. When he reached the camp and sat down to dinner, he asked Billy:

"How much oakum have we in all?"

"Not much. Only a few pounds I should say," answered Billy.

"Then we must pick a good deal more, for we'll need it. We have some old tarred rope, I think?"

"Yes, a little, but not very much. Why, Max?"

"Why, the *Sarah Ann's* caulking is started in many places. In some it has dropped out altogether. We shall have to replace it. And we have some larger repairs to make too. When she went over on her beam ends that little howitzer of ours broke loose from its fastenings and fell into the sea, smashing the port rail as it went, and carrying away some of the ship's planking. That damage is above water of course, when the ship rides on an even keel, but if she should

heel much to port, as she must when the wind is on her starboard beam, or if high seas should strike her port side, as they must when the wind is the other way, a small river would flow in through the rent, perhaps swamping the craft. It will be your job, Tibe, to devise means of repairing that damage."

"All right, Max. We have plenty of timber and planking but we have next to no spikes. I say, Billy, is there an auger among the tools you got out?"

"No," answered Billy. "But there's a brace, with a full set of bits. The biggest one however, won't make a hole of more than three quarters of an inch in diameter."

"That is quite sufficient. I'll mend that breach, Max."

"What is your plan? You say we have hardly any spikes."

"We'll do without them. I'll use live oak pegs instead. They will answer the purpose quite as well, and by good luck there is a large live oak stick out there at our lumber pile on the beach. By boring holes where we want spikes, and driving live oak pegs through we can fasten our planking on, quite as securely as we could if we had a ton of the best wrought iron spikes ever made."

"Very well," said Max. "I've seen sailors do that. Now we must get back to work."

"Excuse me, for half an hour, please," said Billy. "I must dress George's leg. I'll join you as soon as I do that."

CHAPTER XXXV

A Time for Hurried Work

WHEN Billy joined his companions at their work, he wore a look of serious anxiety on his face.

"Max," he said with much earnestness, "how long do you suppose it will be, before we can manage to get away from here?"

"Are you growing restless and impatient, Billy?"

"Yes, very much so, since I examined George Smith's leg just now."

"Why, what's the matter? Is the wound worse?"

"Yes, greatly worse, and George is feverish again. I'm seriously alarmed about him. I'm afraid gangrene will set in if we are long delayed in getting him into a hospital. If that should happen, with no surgeon within reach, to amputate the leg, of course the poor fellow would die without the least chance for us to save him."

"If it is so bad as that," interrupted Tibe, "I for one will volunteer to work night and day till

we get away. I will content myself with one or two hours' sleep in every twenty-four. We mustn't let that glorious good fellow die, if hard work and hurry can prevent it."

"Certainly not," said Max. "But we should soon break down and make an entire failure of our effort if we should try to work with only one or two hours' sleep in twenty-four. We can manage to do with four hours each day, however, and we'll do it. We'll let everything go that we can let go with even tolerable safety, and we'll waste no time. Now to work. The first thing is to caulk. I'll show you how to do it, and we have tools enough. We must work above the water now. When the tide goes out we'll attend to the lower seams."

With a little instruction the boys quickly learned how to roll the oakum into a loose sort of rope of proper thickness, and drive it into every open seam. They worked with all possible rapidity and the results of their efforts quickly showed themselves over a large area of the ship's sides. At nightfall they hastily ate some ship biscuit and bacon, without waiting to cook the latter. By the light of a brush fire built almost at the water's edge, they were able to continue their work. The light being less than they needed for the best results, Tibe split up a board of fat, resinous pine,

which is called "light wood" at the south, because of its use in making torches, and fed the fire with it from time to time as it was needed. At midnight, Max ordered a cessation of work.

"You two take some of the old tarred rope and go up to camp with it. I'll join you presently and we'll make a fresh lot of oakum before we sleep. We've about used up our supply and must have more ready before morning."

The boys went, while Max climbed aboard the sloop and inspected. Then he worked a pump for a while, after which he went into the hold again carrying a piece of burning light wood for a torch. With an air of pleased satisfaction, he then returned to the camp, where he found his comrades busily tearing the tarred rope to pieces and shredding it into that condition in which it is called oakum. They had already manufactured a goodly pile of the stuff, and Max, sitting down by them, lent his practiced hands to the work.

"Fellows," he said while his nimble fingers worked at the task, "the lower seams are all right, or pretty nearly so. I've pumped out the water that was in the hold, and although it is now high water, it doesn't leak in again to any alarming extent. We'll examine those seams carefully at extreme low water in the morning, caulk the worst places we find and let it go at that. My

calculation is that if we get to work early and work hard, we shall finish the caulking before another night. Then I'll white lead the seams, while you fellows work at that break in the port gunwale."

"Where will you get the white lead?" asked Tibe in astonishment.

"I've got it already. Every ship carries white lead as an indispensable part of her supplies, and we had a keg of it in the lazaret. Now lie down and go to sleep. It is one o'clock,"—looking at George Smith's watch which he was carrying by George's request,—"and we must be up again at five."

By noon of that day, the caulking was done, and during the afternoon Max painted all the seams with white lead, giving the little ship a peculiarly mottled, striped look, which Tibe pronounced "thoroughly dissolute and disreputable." In the meanwhile Tibe and Billy were making good, though somewhat slow progress with their task of patching up the hole in the ship's gunwale, and repairing the bulwarks. Max joined them in this work as soon as he had finished the white leading, and they had very nearly completed it, when they quitted work at midnight.

They were all extremely tired, but their anxiety to complete their preparations and get away from

the island in time to save George Smith's life, supported them in their determination to rest content with a scant four hours' sleep each night.

Billy had examined and dressed the boy's wound twice during the day—the last time about sunset.

"He is decidedly better to-day than he was yesterday," Billy had reported. "The wound is about as bad as ever, but his fever is gone, or nearly so, and that is an excellent thing. Still it may return at any moment, and in any case the inflammation in his leg is exceedingly severe. The wound will kill him to a certainty if we do not get a surgeon at work upon it very soon. So we simply *must* hurry things all we can."

About eleven o'clock that night George, now free from fever, and quite perfectly understanding how heroically his comrades were working to save him, and how greatly exhausted they were becoming, painfully raised himself to a sitting posture. With great difficulty, he managed, while still sitting, to slide himself along the sand to the fire. He seized the kettle, poured about two quarts of water into it from the turtle shell, put a liberal supply of coffee into the water, and, with a struggle, set the kettle upon a mass of hot coals. He watched it till it began to boil, when, after stirring it with a twig, he drew it from its place to one where it would keep hot without quite

boiling. Then, quite exhausted, he lay back upon the sand.

When, a little later, the boys made their weary way to the camp, they were shocked, distressed, and even alarmed to find how the wounded fellow had been exerting himself for their benefit. They almost scolded him for what he had done, but he earnestly protested that he had in no way injured himself, adding: "It's very little that I can do now for you fellows, while you are nearly killing yourselves with over-work and insufficient sleep, all for me. So, please, Tibe," as Tibe was about to carry him back to the shelter, "please let me lie here and see you fellows refresh yourselves with the strong, hot coffee."

"The exertion doesn't seem to have brought the fever back," reported Billy after feeling George's pulse, "so I see no reason why you shouldn't lie where you are while we drink the coffee. But you mustn't do that sort of thing again, old fellow. It's dangerous!"

"Yes, and you mustn't spoil our plans," added Max, "by making yourself worse again. We are going to have you comfortably resting under an awning on the deck of the *Sairey Ann,* within less than a week. There, that's the last of the coffee," as he drained the kettle into the oyster

shells, "so Tibe, carry George gently to his bed, and then we must all go to sleep."

"Shall we really get away within a week, Max?" asked Billy.

"Yes, I think so. An hour's work or so in the morning will finish the repairs, and I've estimated the rest of our task as likely to occupy not more than four days or five at most. Indeed we may possibly finish in three days—working as we are now—though that is not likely. Now go to sleep. It is after taps and there must be no more talking tonight."

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Sairey Ann Floats

NOW that the ship was riding on her keel again, and with all her cargo out of her, she drew only a little water. Her stern and indeed two-thirds of her length was afloat at every high tide, only her bow resting upon the sand in the shallow water.

"The next thing to be done," said Max, when work was begun in the morning, "is to get the ship afloat. But we cannot do that till high water. It will not be difficult then, I think. In the meanwhile we'll put in our time working on the new boom!"

"Why not step the mast again before pushing her off?" asked Billy.

"Because that would add considerably to her weight and draught," answered Max. "It would make the task of launching just so much the harder."

Billy had not thought of that. Going into the woods Max selected a straight young tree of the right size, cut it down, and with the assistance of the others carried it to the shore. There the

party stripped it of its bark, smoothed away every inequality of its surface and carefully fitted it to the mast, using for that purpose the iron throat from the broken boom.

By this time the flood tide was at high water, and it was necessary to set to work at the task of launching the ship. It proved to be a more difficult thing than Max had anticipated. The sloop's nose was deeply buried in the sand, and no direct effort that the boys could make, was sufficient to move her even by so much as an inch. After several futile attempts with timber levers and other devices, Max said:

"There is nothing for it, fellows, but to dig her nose out of the sand."

"Why not hitch a block and tackle to her stern," Tibe asked, "and pull her off in that way?"

"Because both our block and tackle rigs put together would not reach across the bay," answered Max, "and that is the direction in which we must pull her. We have nothing to which to make the tackle fast in that direction."

"Pardon me," said Tibe, "but I think we have."

"What?"

"We can hitch it to that anchor line out there. The anchor will hold, won't it?"

"What a blockhead I am, not to have thought of that," said Max, "with the buoy of the anchor rope staring me in the face all the time and not fifty feet away! Take a plank to float the block upon, Tibe, and swim out there as quickly as you can. The tide is beginning to ebb and we must not lose this high water. Make the block securely fast and then swim ashore with the fall rope."

Tibe was quick to carry out these orders, and within ten minutes, the three were pulling lustily at the rope, while the sloop slowly relinquished its hold upon the sand and slipped out into deep water.

Swimming out and climbing aboard of her Max made the anchor line fast to a ring bolt in the deck, and once more the *Sarah Ann* rode easily at anchor. Observing her, with the stripes of white lead that streaked her hull, Billy ventured the suggestion that "she looks for all the world like a clown in the circus."

But no time was wasted in talking. "We must build a wharf, with such timbers as we have," said Max, "and we must do it at once."

"What is that for?" asked Tibe.

"Why, we must bring the ship up to some sort of temporary wharf, from which we can get our cargo of cotton on board, without grounding the sloop."

"Why not leave the cotton here?" asked Tibe; "all but the bale marked Circle X? It will take a good deal of time to load it and even a few hours' delay may make a life and death difference to George Smith."

"We cannot leave it," answered Max, while the work of constructing a temporary dock went on. "We have a double need of it. We must have it for ballast, or the *Sairey Ann* will capsize in the first blow we encounter, and we must have it also as a security against sinking if we happen to spring a leak."

"In other words," Billy interrupted, "we need that cotton for the sake of its weight, and we need it for the sake of its lack of weight."

"Well, you see—" began Max.

"Oh, don't explain it, Max," Billy broke in; "I quite understand the thing, and we mustn't talk now but work."

The boys arranged their timbers into a sort of frame work and covered them with the planks, making a long floating pier, which they secured to the shore with vines attached to trees, and held firmly in place with stout stakes driven into the sand at the outer end.

This made a wharf at the outer edge of which there was more than six feet of water at low tide. The boys then returned to their task of completing

the new boom and transferring to it all the fixtures of the old one.

"Now," said Max, when that was done, "we must bring the *Sarah Ann* to the wharf, and first we must raise the anchor. Come on, both of you."

With that they all plunged into the water, and swam to the ship. Climbing aboard, they attached the anchor line to the windlass, and slowly drew the sloop toward the anchor, till the line stretched straight down and the anchor let go its hold upon the bottom. As soon as it was aboard, Max unbent the line from its fastening, and taking the end of it in his hand, leaped overboard, calling out to his companions:

"One of you come ashore with me, while the other pays out rope to us."

When he and Tibe reached shore, Max hastily fastened the rope to a tree and called to Billy, who had remained on board, to haul in by the windlass. In a brief while the sloop was brought in safety to the wharf, with her port side lying across its end, and securely made fast to the shore at bow and stern.

It was by this time within less than an hour of sunset and all the boys were manifestly growing weak, with their hard work, their loss of sleep, their hurried way of eating,—they had taken no

dinner at all that day—and above all, because of their anxiety for George.

"We must eat now, abundantly and without hurry," said Max; "otherwise we shall not have strength for the hard work we must do tonight."

"What is it, Max?" asked Billy.

"We must step that mast before we sleep, and rig the sails ready for use. We're nearing the end of our preparations now, and I hope to finish them tomorrow night. At any rate, we must try for that. At present, our chief business is to get the heartiest, wholesomest supper we can. Tibe, you go down the beach and bring a quantity of oysters. You, Billy, attend to George's wound. I will go the rounds of the traps and see if there is any game in them. Is there any fish in George's pound?"

"No," answered Billy; "not even a fin or a scale. But perhaps I can catch some before you and Tibe get back. I'll try, at any rate."

Billy found George nearly free from fever, but the wound showed no improvement. "The only good thing about it," he muttered to himself as he dressed the hurt, "is that it doesn't seem to be in any marked degree worse than it was this morning."

Having finished his attention to the invalid,

Billy took the hook and line and hurried to the pier. Climbing aboard the ship for the sake of reaching the deep water on the other side he dropped in his line. A minute later he landed a fine large fish of a variety unknown to him, on the deck. Leaping down to the wharf, he hastily cleaned his fish, and then hurried back to the camp fire where he buried it in the coals.

Soon afterwards Tibe returned with a liberal supply of oysters and Max soon followed, bearing two marsh hens.

"We're quite all right for supper now," said Billy gleefully. "We have everything necessary —especially an abundant supply of appetites. Pick your birds while I make a pot of coffee. Then I'll feed you both—not forgetting myself—on oysters, while you're getting the game ready for broiling."

Neither of the others had thought to ask Billy anything about the results of his fishing, and Billy had no mind to volunteer information on that head for the present. Having set his coffee to steep, he threw some oysters on the fire, and as they opened their shells under the influence of the heat, he fed them one by one to his comrades, devouring his own share as he did so. When the birds were ready for the coals, Billy drew his fish from the ashes, and served it on a palm leaf, to the pleased surprise of his comrades. George,

especially, was the better for this dainty, as in his condition, it was unsafe for him to eat heavier food. For two or three days past, he had eaten almost nothing, but now that his fever was gone he had an appetite. He ate a bit of one of the birds also, and soon afterwards dropped to sleep.

"Now for half an hour's rest," said Max, finishing his coffee. "It won't be a waste of time, for we'll work all the better for letting our supper digest."

CHAPTER XXXVII

Toilers of the Night

AFTER a brief but refreshing rest, the boys returned to their work.

"We shall need plenty of light," said Max throwing down the burning brand he had brought with him and heaping some dry brush upon it. "Split up a good supply of light wood boys, while I see just what is to be done first."

After inspecting carefully, Max rigged up a short tackle and attached it to the mast, which lay on shore.

"We can carry the stick, Max," said Tibe.

"Yes, but it is very heavy, and we mustn't waste our strength. We've none too much of that equipment at best. We'll use mechanical aids wherever they will serve our purpose."

He drew in on the tackle, dragging the mast from the shore to the wharf and thence lifting it up the side of the ship to the level of the gunwale. Tibe and Billy were by that time on deck, ready to lift the timber aboard. Proceeding in the same way with the new boom, they soon had

that also in place. They laid it along the deck fore and aft, with its throat just above the ring through which the mast was to be inserted. As there was nothing above the deck, to which to attach a tackle, it was necessary to raise the mast into place by sheer muscular strength, and the task was a difficult one. When at last it was accomplished, the tired youths felt themselves nearly exhausted. But as their next task, the rigging of the sail, the adjustment of stays, halyards, and the like, involved very little of severe muscular exertion, they adhered to their determination to continue their work until midnight. They rested for a brief time, and then, under Max's skilled direction, fitted new ropes where the old ones had been broken, and little by little got all the sailing gear into running order. Just before finishing, Max asked Billy to go up to the camp and look after George Smith, while he and Tibe should complete the remaining details.

Before they had quite accomplished that, Billy came hurrying back with a scared look in his face, and climbing to the deck, said:

"Max, I'm afraid we're too late to save that poor fellow. He is in a raging fever, and so delirious that he does not even recognize me. He is raving about being compelled to shoot at us fellows. It is pitiful."

"It is so, certainly," said Max. "But isn't it a little curious that so high a fever should have developed so suddenly? Four or five hours ago he had no fever at all. Wounds like his do not usually behave in that way, do they?"

"No, and that puzzles me. It also gives me a little hope, if only we can get away from here soon enough."

"How do you mean, Billy? Tell us what is in your mind."

"Why, I can't think George's fever comes altogether from his wound. If it did, it would not die out and come back again as it does. So much fever as he has had, if it had been due solely to an inflamed wound, would surely have brought gangrene with it, and George would have died days and days ago. He is not acclimated to our South Carolina coast country, you know, and I suspect that he has contracted country fever there. If he were not wounded, or if his wound were a good deal less inflamed than it is, I should be sure of that. As it is, I don't know, but I would give him calomel and quinine on the chance of it being so, if we had a medicine chest aboard. As we haven't, of course we can do nothing."

"Yes, we can," said Max thoughtfully, and speaking very slowly. "Yes, we can if you fellows still feel yourselves equal to a spurt of work."

"How? What do you propose?" asked both the others in unison.

"Why, next to quinine, there is no remedy so effective in malarial fevers, as movement, change, travel. So if you fellows feel equal to it, I propose that we work all night tonight, and sail out of this bay on the ebb tide which will begin a little before noon tomorrow—or today rather, for it is now past midnight. Perhaps the change and the sea air may so far benefit our companion as to enable us even yet to get him into a hospital."

Billy answered through his set teeth: "I for one, am ready to work till I drop in my tracks to save George Smith's life."

Tibe solemnly said: "Amen," and then added: "Tell us quick what to do next, Max. We absolutely must not lose that tide, though just why we must go out on an ebb tide I don't at all understand."

"The current," said Max, as he hurriedly tied the last knots needed in the ship's gear, "the current in the entrance of the bay, would be too strong for us on a flood tide—"

"Oh, yes, now I see," broke in Tibe, "and on the ebb it will float us out whether there's a wind or not."

"Precisely. Now go ashore and roll cotton

bales to the ship, both of you, while I rig a hoist here."

The two set to work as lustily as if they had not used their muscles for a week past and felt the need of exercise. In the meanwhile Max fastened a simple two-pulleyed block and tackle rig to the top of the mast, and attaching a pair of hoisting tongs, like those of the ice man, but larger, to its end, was ready for hoisting the cotton aboard. He instantly joined his comrades in their part of the work, and although the cotton lay at some distance from the point at which they had built their pier for the sake of the deep water, they managed, within an hour or a little more, to roll all of it through the deep soft sand and place it on the wharf by the side of the ship.

Max directed Billy to remain on the wharf and fasten the grappling tongs to the bales one after another. He himself took charge of the hoist, and with its aid lifted the bales aboard. Tibe stood at the hatchway to receive the bales as they were swung in board, and to guide them as Max lowered them into the hold. When four bales were in, Max suspended the hoisting, he and Tibe going below to roll them into place and to wedge them securely there so that they might not shift when the sloop should get to sea.

He directed Billy, while this was going on, to go up to the camp and ascertain George's condition. When four more bales were lowered into the hold, there was a second suspension of hoisting, for the same purpose as before, and Billy made a second visit to the sick man. This time he reported his patient slightly improved.

"The fever is slowly abating," he announced, "and the delirium has given way to sleep. I begin to feel sure now that it is country fever. How I do wish we had some calomel and quinine!"

But it was of no use wishing, and Max was ready to hoist in the four remaining bales of the cargo. When that was done and the bales had all been properly placed, Max called out:

"Now for the bale marked Circle X!"

That precious charge lay far down the shore of the bay, and daylight was upon the party before they got it aboard. But the brave young fellows had accomplished far more by their all night's work, than they had expected to do.

"We may quit now," said Max, "and get some breakfast. We have nearly six hours left before our sailing time. In that time we can easily do the little that remains to be done. Just now we are famished as well as exhausted. We must have something to eat. We'll fry a panful of

oysters and bacon, and make a big pot of coffee. That, with some ship biscuit, will restore our strength mightily."

"Yes," said Tibe, who could never quite lay aside his mood of mild jesting, "and just now I am prepared to contribute liberally to a monument to the man who first invented eating. I'd melt down our last frying pan to furnish the metal for his statue."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"Once More Upon the Waters"

THERE was time enough, as Max had said, in which to do all that must be done before sailing; but there was no time to waste, and weary as they were the three youths were busily at work again as soon as breakfast was over.

"Tibe," said Max, "suppose you put a bushel or so of oysters aboard; and you, Billy, run out to the old garden and get a supply of sweet potatoes. We can't bake them on board, but we can fry them, and they and the oysters will give a little variety to our sea fare. In the meantime I will take the compass and the chronometer aboard and fit them into place. Don't waste any time."

The two boys returned with their supplies before Max had quite finished his work of securing the compass and chronometer in place. He directed them next to take all the water kegs to the spring and fill them.

"I'll be there in time to help roll them," he said, and he was careful to keep his word, for the transportation of these water casks was one of

the hardest pieces of work to be done that morning. When it was done, the weary all night toilers proceeded to collect all the tools, cooking utensils and provisions and bestow them in their proper places aboard. They took on board also, the largest of their clean oyster shells for drinking cups.

Then, while Max busied himself lashing the bale marked Circle X to the deck, the others went into the woods and brought out a large supply of the long, gray Spanish moss. A part of this they arranged into a soft bed for George Smith, on deck amidships. The rest they stowed below as a reserve supply with which to renew the wounded boy's couch from time to time.

"Now, fellows, put a lot of those planks aboard," said Max. "We'll need some of them with which to wedge the cargo more securely in place. We'll do that after we get to sea. We'll need the rest to split up and burn in the brazier, for all our charcoal floated away while the ship was a wreck."

While the others were doing this Max lashed the anchor to its fastenings, and personally inspected the lashings of the water casks to see that they were secure.

"Now," he said, detaching the jib from its stays, "we must bring George Smith aboard as gently as possible. We can carry him in the jib



"THEN THE THREE SEIZED THE CORNERS OF THE TRIANGULAR CLOTH, AND GENTLY CARRIED THE BOY TO THE SHIP."

without jolting I think. Come on. It is full high water now, and we must get under way as soon as possible."

The wounded boy was much improved. His fever had almost entirely left him, thus additionally confirming Billy in his conviction that it was mainly of malarial origin and character. But the poor fellow was so weak that he could scarcely lift his hand to his head, and his wounded leg was still in an alarming state of inflammation.

"The fever will come back again," said Billy. "But for a time at least George will be comparatively easy. The problem now is to get him into a hospital before the wound and the fever can kill him."

They spread the jib sail cloth out upon the ground, and Tibe tenderly lifted the sick boy and laid him in it, Billy in the meanwhile so arranging a bundle of moss as to support the wounded leg in an easy condition. Then the three seized the corners of the triangular cloth, and gently carried the boy to the ship, where they laid him, in the most comfortable position they could manage to secure, upon his bed of moss. By Max's orders, the bed had been laid exactly in the middle of the deck, over the keel, and running lengthwise the ship, so as to reduce the effect of the vessel's rolling, to a minimum.

"Now, Tibe," said Max, "you are our master mechanic. I want you to fasten two boards on edge to the deck, one on each side of the bed, so that no motion of the sloop can roll George over. Brace them firmly. I believe we have a few nails left. While you are doing that Billy and I will get the boat under way. Cast her loose, Billy, and then jump aboard."

As soon as the sloop was freed from her moorings she drifted, upon the receding tide, away from the shore and out into the bay. Max let out the main sheet to its full length, so that the boom might swing free, and he and Billy hoisted the mainsail. When it was up and the halyards were made fast, Max went to the tiller and called to Billy to haul in the main sheet. The wind was light even outside on the sea. Within the little bay it was a mere breeze, but it sufficed to fill the sail, and give steerage way to the sloop.

Under Max's careful guidance she sped gently forward, into the narrow entrance, and out upon the sea. Catching there a fresher breeze, she quickly left the shore behind, and little by little the island which had been the scene of such trying adventures, and of such heroic endeavors to find or make a way out of a difficulty, grew smaller in the distance.

"We are exhausted," said Tibe, "but in spite

of that let's give three cheers and a tiger for that little scrap of land which has served us so well for a shelter. Hip, hip, hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

Even poor, ill George Smith feebly joined in the cheering, and at no time since they had sailed out of Charleston in a terrific thunder storm, had the little company been one half so happy as at this moment.

"Go forward, boys," commanded Max, "and set the jib. Then eat a biscuit or two and go to sleep. I'll keep watch for the next two hours."

He said this scarcely above his breath, so utterly was his strength gone out of him, and both his companions urged him to sleep first.

"No," he said, "you fellows must get two hours' sleep now. I must do the navigating till we get well away from the island. Besides, I have another reason. I want to look out for ships till nightfall."

"Why, Max? You don't expect to be overhauled out here do you?"

"No. But I want to overhaul somebody else. There, I'm too tired to explain. Go to sleep."

During his two hours on watch Max kept his marine glass by him, and frequently scanned the horizon with it. But no ship appeared. He gnawed upon a sea biscuit to appease his appetite, and when his time was up, and he waked Billy

to take the tiller, he opened three or four oysters in succession and swallowed them. Then he threw himself, exhausted, upon the deck, saying: "Hold the course we're on, Billy, as long as this wind continues steady. If it shifts, or rises, or if you sight land or a ship, call me at once. When your time is up pass the same orders on to Tibe."

A minute later, the weary young navigator was asleep.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Nearing Port

WHEN Billy roused Tibe to take the tiller, the tall fellow was almost stupefied with the four hours' sleep he had had after the long strain of sleepless and tireless toil. He slipped off his scant clothing, dipped up a pail full of sea water, held it above his head and emptied it over his person. Repeating this "eye opener," as he called it, three or four times, he felt quite fresh again. Throughout the night the little company adhered to the plan of standing two hour watches. This gave to each boy four hours' sleep to every two hours of work, and when morning came, they were all fresh enough and energetic enough to cook and eat a hearty breakfast of oysters, bacon, ship biscuit and coffee, after which they were quite themselves again, except for some slightly painful stiffness in their overtaxed muscles. Being robust and perfectly healthy young fellows, their recovery from fatigue had been quick.

Soon after breakfast, Billy examined George

and found him again in a high fever. With Max's help he rigged up a little awning, of sail cloth, to protect the invalid from the sun, which threatened to shine fervidly as the day advanced.

Just as these arrangements for the sick boy's comfort were completed, Tibe, who was at the helm, announced a sail on the horizon. Max took the tiller, changed the sloop's course, and bore down upon the vessel. As the *Sarah Ann* drew nearer to her, Max made her out to be a German brig, and when he came near enough to speak her, he bade Billy take the chronometer and be ready to set it the moment he should give the order. He instructed Tibe to pay close heed to any figures he might give him, and to remember them. Then he called out something in German to the stranger, and a German reply came back.

"Set it at 6.52, Billy," the young captain said quickly and Billy obeyed promptly. Then Max called to the stranger again, and when the answer came back, he shouted:

"Danka schön, mein Herr! Guten Morgen!"

Then turning to Tibe he said:

"Remember these figures—twenty-six forty, north, seventy-one twenty-seven west. Mark that down somewhere," and he handed Tibe a little stub of a pencil.

Taking up his sextant he made an observation,

Billy giving him the chronometer time, and after figuring a while on a piece of board, he said with satisfaction:

"That German captain has got his reckoning quite accurately. I make it within a minute of his figures. How much was the chronometer out of the way before you set it Billy?"

"Only about five minutes."

"Well, for guess work that was a pretty close result. Still it relieves my mind to have the error corrected. I know the way to Nassau now."

"How far is it?" eagerly asked Tibe, who had gone back to the helm after Max had laid the course anew.

"A little over a hundred miles. We are almost due north of the port—only six minutes west of north—and we are one degree and thirty-five minutes north of it. We have between one hundred and five and one hundred and ten miles to make—or we should have if we could lay a straight course. As we must follow a channel between the islands we have a trifle farther to go. But we have the trade wind strong now, and if it holds, we'll be in port by the morning of day after tomorrow at furthest."

"Then we'll save George Smith's life yet," said Billy with a glad look in his face. "His fever is not nearly so high today as it was yesterday.

Your remedy of travel and sea air, Max, is having its effect."

"I didn't know you spoke German, Max," said Tibe; "you rattled off all that like a Dutchman."

"I do not speak the language," said the young captain, "at least in any creditable way. But as I have spent nearly all my life at sea, in ships that traded to all countries, I have picked up enough of many languages to understand and make myself understood in any of them, so far as simple things are concerned. I think I could ask those questions which I asked in German this morning, in the language of any maritime country in the world, including Malay, Chinese and Japanese. All sailors are obliged to pick up a smattering of many tongues in that way—all sailors I mean, who make trading voyages to many countries. Now I must stop talking and study my charts."

When Max put away the charts, half an hour later, Billy said:

"I'm sorry for the people at Nassau."

"Why, Billy?"

"For the shock they'll get when we go ashore."

"Well, we are a sorry looking lot, aren't we?" said Tibe, looking the party over. "We have no hats, and no coats. We've worn our flannel shirts into holes, by carrying oysters and other

things in them. Our trousers are thoroughly ventilated at the knees and elsewhere, and as for our boots, they are such as the meanest beggar alive would scorn to wear."

"By the way, Max," Billy broke in, "how are we to get any clothing, or pay for our board in Nassau? You didn't happen to bring any money with you, did you?"

"No. But we'll get all we need at Nassau."

"How will you manage that?"

"Why, the agent to whom the bale marked Circle X is consigned, probably has orders to provide for our necessities. If not, we've got the twelve other bales, and at present prices for cotton at Nassau they are worth a moderate fortune—three or four thousand dollars in gold at the very least."

"But won't the agent take them?"

"Not if I do not ask him to do so. I had them consigned to me as master of the ship. I can do whatever I think best to do with the ship and all her cargo—all but the bale marked Circle X. Our cargo does not belong to the government, but to Fraser, Trenholm & Co. I can do what I please with the proceeds of its sale, only accounting to Fraser, Trenholm & Co., who will of course be reimbursed by the government for such part of

the proceeds as I find it necessary to spend for our support. So you see we shall be in abundant funds, when we get to Nassau."

"What will you do with the money, Max?"

"Buy quinine. That is just now the most precious of all commodities in the Confederacy. We'll ship it on the government blockade runner, R. E. Lee, commanded by my father's friend Captain Wilkinson, formerly of the United States Navy. And we'll take passage with him too, on his next trip. Now to business. From now until we make port, I shall stay at the helm during all the night watches, leaving you two fellows only the day shifts. As I have already explained to you, there may be some difficult sailing to do among these unlighted islands, so I must be on watch whenever it is dark. You two are also to wake me during the day, if you sight land at any time or if any other emergency arises."

No emergency arose during that day, however, and Max managed to get abundant sleep. About five o'clock in the afternoon he took an observation and worked out the ship's position. Then turning to Billy, he asked:

"How is your patient?"

"Much better. His fever has abated and he is resting comfortably. You were clearly right in thinking the sea air and change would benefit

him. I made up a little dish for him a while ago —sea biscuit stewed in oyster broth—and he is the better for having eaten some of it."

At this moment George called Max in a feeble voice, and the young shipmaster went at once and sat down by his side.

"Max," said the boy presently, "we are nearing port, are we not?"

"Yes, George, and I am glad of it especially on your account. We hurried as much as we could, to get you away from that island, and—"

"Yes, I know," said the boy. "You fellows worked all night and nearly killed yourselves trying to save my life. I was out of my head sometimes, but whenever the fever went down, I knew what was going on, and I can never thank any of you enough for your self sacrificing efforts on my behalf."

"We don't want thanks, George. We only want you to get well and strong again. We worked hard because we were determined to get you into a hospital before it should be too late, and we shall succeed in that, now. By my latest reckoning, we have only about eighty miles between us and Nassau, so if the weather holds good, we ought to be there by this time tomorrow for the ship is behaving beautifully, and the wind is altogether favorable."

"Thank you all!" said the boy, with all of fervor that his weakness permitted. "Now I want to say something, while the fever is off, for I suppose it will come on again tomorrow. I want you to keep that watch of mine, Max, and then you'll remember your wounded passenger every time you consult it. It has one great merit —it is as *true* as you fellows are."

Max quickly found out that it was useless to protest. So he accepted the proffered souvenir.

CHAPTER XL

Major Max

NO further event of importance occurred during the remainder of the voyage. George's fever returned in the morning of the next day, but with very moderate severity, and it abated almost entirely about noon. At two o'clock in the afternoon the entrance to Nassau harbor lay a few miles ahead. Max stood at the helm, his chart spread out before him and in constant use.

At three o'clock the sloop passed over the bar, and sailed into port.

"Lower away the mainsail," he called to his companions, "and cast the anchor overboard."

With a great sigh of relief, and a look of exultation in his face, the young shipmaster left the tiller and began pacing the deck in triumph.

"We have done the trick, fellows," he said, using the nautical phrase quite unconsciously. "We have saved George Smith's life, and we have brought the bale marked Circle X in safety to Nassau. Now, we must wait here till the port officers come aboard."

There was not long to wait. The officers rather wonderingly learned that this clumsy and patched old harbor sloop had actually run the close blockade at Charleston, and made her way to the capital of the Bahamas. They "passed" the ship and permitted her to lay herself alongside Fraser, Trenholm & Company's dock.

There the Confederate agent came aboard. Max's first demand was for the United States Consul or other official.

"What have you to do with the United States officials?" asked the agent. "Your ship is under the Confederate flag."

"Yes, I know," answered the young shipmaster, "but I have a wounded and very sick young Federal soldier aboard, whom I want to place in hospital at once. We picked him up from the water as we were sailing out of Charleston; I want to put him into the hands of some official of his own government, who has authority to look after him."

The agent wanted to hear the whole story, before acting, but Max impatiently took matters into his own hands, and asked one of the clerks of Fraser, Trenholm & Co., to send for the United States Consul at once. Within half an hour, an ambulance was brought and George was lifted into it, the consul warmly commending the ship's

company for their generous and kindly care of him.

"Good-bye for the present, George," said Max as he and his comrades placed the wounded young man in the easy moving vehicle. "We will visit you at the hospital as soon as we get through our immediate business, and make ourselves presentable."

When the ambulance had moved off, Max turned to the Confederate agent, who seemed a person "flyblown with authority and conceit," as Billy said, and asked if he could provide food and clothing for himself and his crew.

"I have orders," said the agent, "to look to the wants of Mr. Voxetter and his crew. Or rather I had such orders, when the *Sarah Ann* was expected here. But you have so unaccountably delayed your arrival—"

"I am in no way accountable to you, sir, I believe," Max answered hotly, "and I will thank you to reserve any criticism you may have to make upon my conduct of this expedition. I'll make my report on that subject to the War Department at Richmond. Now will you or will you not provide us with clothing and food supplies?"

The man's dignity was deeply offended. He answered:

"When you establish your identity to my

satisfaction, I will do what is necessary. At present I have no means of knowing whether you are Captain Voxetter, or some person who has captured Captain Voxetter's ship and cargo. So I'll take charge of the bale marked Circle X, and when you establish your identity—"

"And I, in my turn," answered Max, with flushed face and flaming eyes, "have no means of knowing whether you are the person you profess to be, or some enemy of my government, endeavoring to secure possession of the bale marked Circle X. I will trouble you to prove your identity. Until you do so, I will not deliver the bale marked Circle X into your hands."

"But all these people know me," said the man, waving his hand toward the clerks and others on the wharf.

"Perhaps so," answered Max, nonchalantly, "but I do not know them. I'll trouble you to establish your identity by the testimony of some witness who is known to me."

"But, that is nonsense" said the agent. "You do not know anybody in Nassau, and my official position is known to everybody."

"So is mine, as master of this ship," said Max. "The port officers here have accepted my papers and passed the ship with me in command. I did not invite this contest of red tape. You forced

it upon me. Now I shall not recede an inch from the position I have taken. When you establish your identity—personal and official—to my satisfaction, I will deliver the bale marked Circle X into your hands, and I will not do so till then. As for the rest, I ask no favors of you. I have the means of providing for all our wants."

With that Max turned on his heel and began talking with a representative of the Fraser house.

The now crestfallen jack-in-office went to him, and in an apologetic tone said:

"I beg your pardon, Captain Voxetter. I did not mean to affront you. I am entirely ready to recognize your identity and provide for your needs—"

"I have withdrawn my request for assistance at your hands," said Max with indifference. "As for the bale marked Circle X, I am ready to deliver it as soon as you establish your identity, as I have already notified you."

"But how can I do that?"

"That is your affair, not mine," replied the young shipmaster.

"Do you know anybody in Nassau?"

"I am not sure. Is the steamer *Robert E. Lee* in port?"

"Yes. She arrived from Wilmington yesterday."

"Very well, I am personally acquainted with Captain Wilkinson. Perhaps you might persuade him to come to my ship and identify you."

"That would be asking a good deal of him—"

"Oh, as you please," said Max. "But you must be identified. I only offered what I thought might be a helpful suggestion."

The agent saw that he was completely beaten at his own game of lordly arrogance. He had insisted upon "red tape" and had awkwardly managed to get himself badly entangled in it. He had no choice but to accept the humiliation which he had brought upon himself. He entered his carriage, and drove away. Half an hour later he returned, bringing Captain Wilkinson with him. The captain, who knew the popinjay airs of the agent, grasped the situation instantly, and laughed heartily as he greeted Max, formally introducing the agent.

Max thereupon made formal delivery of the bale marked Circle X, taking duplicate receipts for it, one of which he put into his pocket as his voucher, while he left the other with the Fraser firm, to be sent by the blockade-running steamer which should leave Nassau next after his own departure. This precaution was rendered necessary, by the fact that as a passenger on board Captain Wilkinson's steamer, he might be cap-

tured. He wished to make sure that the evidence of his successful performance of his duty should in any case reach the War Department.

Max then arranged for the speedy sale of his cargo, and the investment of its proceeds in quinine. A hundred dollars or so sufficed to clothe and equip the ship's company, and one week later, after affectionate adieus to George, whose condition was quite satisfactorily improving under skilled treatment, the three young adventurers, sailed as passengers on board the blockade-running steamer, *Robert E. Lee.*

During the week spent in Nassau, Max wrote out his report, telling briefly the story of his voyage. On the arrival of the steamer at Wilmington, Max surprised the officials at Richmond with a telegram, saying:

"Delivered bale marked Circle X to agent at Nassau, and returned with companions on steamer *Robert E. Lee.* Am awaiting orders."

This telegram was the first word the officials in Richmond had heard of Max since the *Sarah Ann* had sailed out of Charleston. They had long since given up the expedition as lost, and their gratification over this news of its success was great.

Presently Max received a telegraphic reply as follows:

" Congratulations and thanks. Report in person at this department, as speedily as possible. Order your men also to Richmond. Quartermaster and Commissary at Wilmington have telegraphic orders to furnish transportation and rations."

On his arrival at Richmond, Max submitted his formal written report, and in answer to the questions of the little colonel, who was now a little brigadier-general, he orally related the events of the voyage. In both his written and oral reports, he dwelt strongly on the faithfulness, sagacity and tireless energy with which William O. Boker and Tiberius Gracchus Smith had seconded his efforts, and the extent to which the success of the expedition was due to their assistance.

" Now, Major," said the little brigadier, " now that you are a commissioned officer, I may with propriety ask you to dine with me today. I hope you will give me the pleasure of your company. I will invite some people to meet you, and I'll expect you to entertain all of us by telling the singularly interesting story of your remarkable voyage at table. We dine at four. That will give you time, perhaps, to fit yourself out with the uniform of your rank."

" But, I do not understand, General—"

" Don't you remember, I told you the last time

we met, that if you ever got back from this expedition, you should be a major without the prefix of 'sergeant'? The moment your telegram came, announcing your success, the President, who is deeply gratified by the service you have so masterfully rendered, ordered your major's commission to be made out to date from the day you sailed out of Charleston. It is in my desk, and I will send it to your hotel at once. You will need a little money of course, and so you'd better draw the month's pay that is already due you as a major."

"But, General, I really cannot consent to this. I have tried to make it clear that my companions—"

"Oh, you're quite right. Quite right. I forgot to tell you that they are provided for. It was very careless of me, very careless. Orders were sent to them an hour ago to report to an examining board, and commissions will be issued to them as first lieutenants. I'll see you at four. Till then au revoir."

Major Maximilian Voxetter thanked the brigadier and bowed himself out of the War Department. The incident of the bale marked Circle X was ended.

* * * * * B

In the month of May, 1865,—the war being over—Major Max lay upon a joggling board in the veranda of his Charleston home, weak and worn with the fever which had been his troublesome companion during all the marching and fighting that had marked the closing scenes of the great struggle. He had steadfastly refused to yield to the weakening malady, until the final end came. Then he betook himself to Charleston for rest and recuperation.

As he lay there upon his joggling board, he heard a step on the veranda. It was a halting step, as of one who was slightly lame. Max sat up, and the next instant exclaimed:

"Why, it is dear old George Smith!"

"Yes," answered the other. "I have come for my revenge. You are ill and this climate is poisonous to one in your condition. I have come to take you away to my home among the Maryland hills. You are my prisoner now, and we are to sail by a steamer which leaves Charleston to-night."

THE END

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